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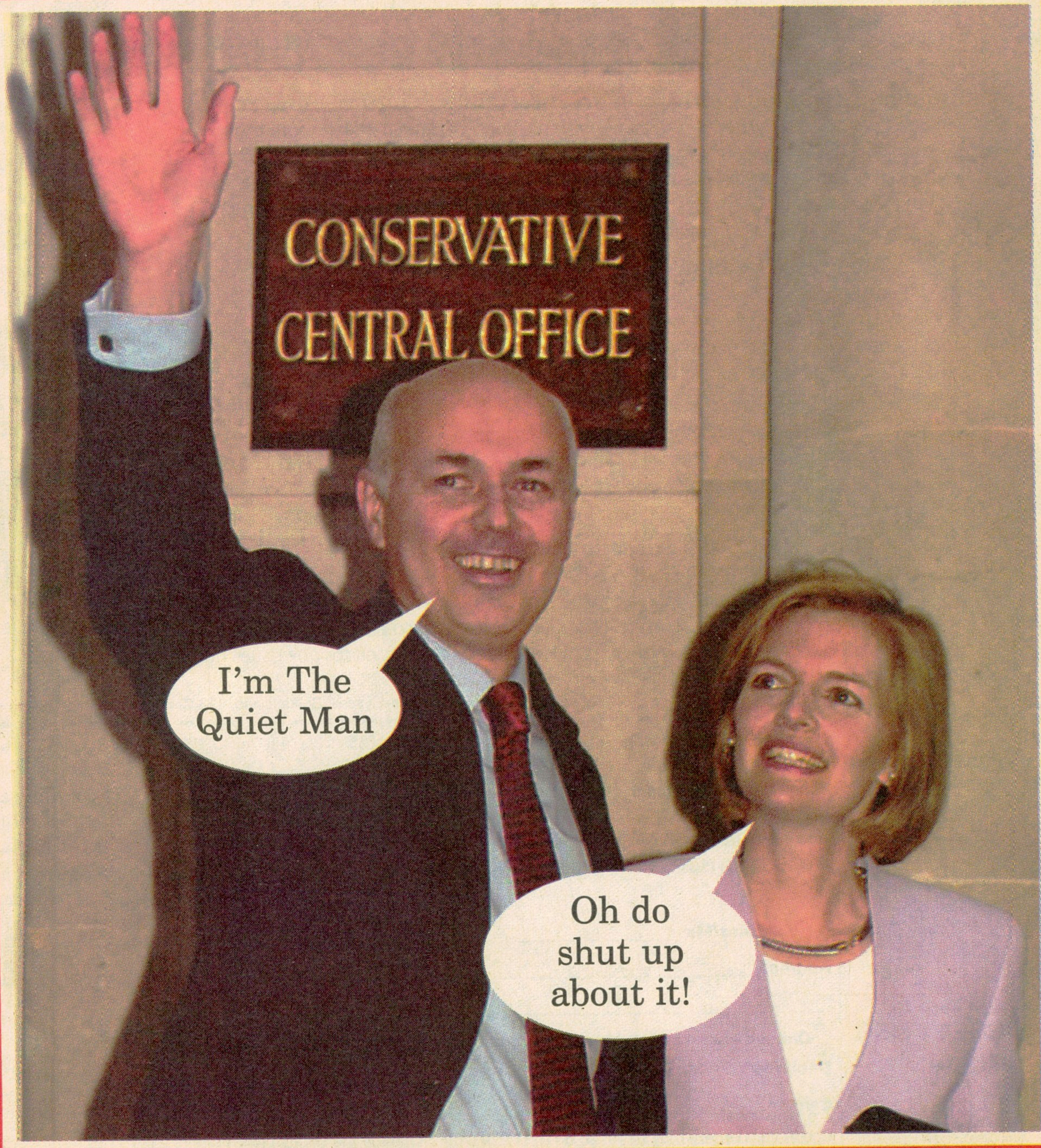

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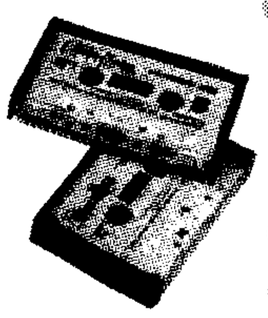

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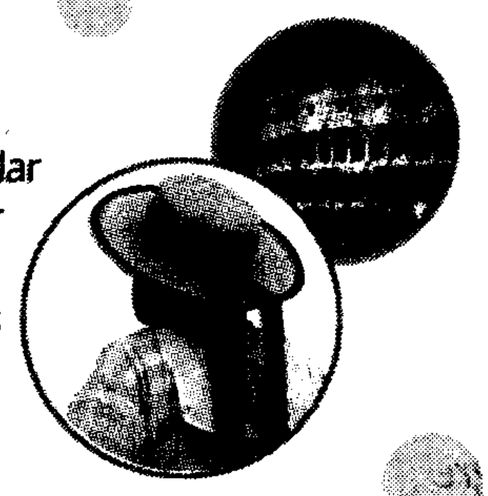

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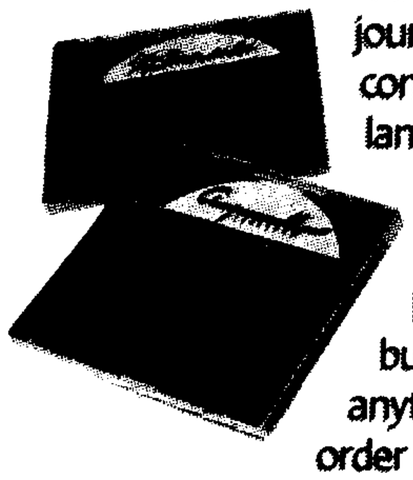

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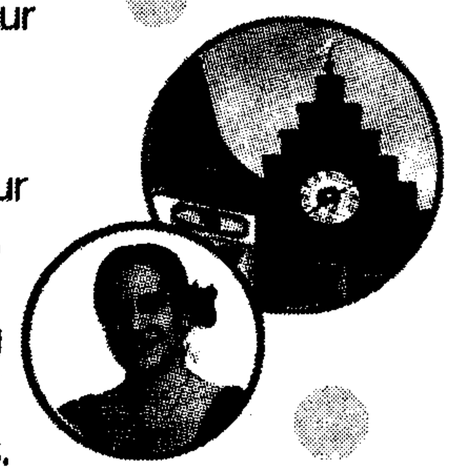

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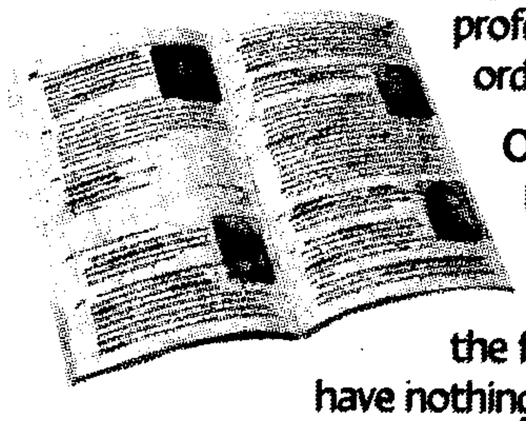

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The Day After Tomorrow: *How the editor tried to get me to join in a three-in-a-newspaper, kiss-and-tell love romp with all the other slappers he had signed up this week.*

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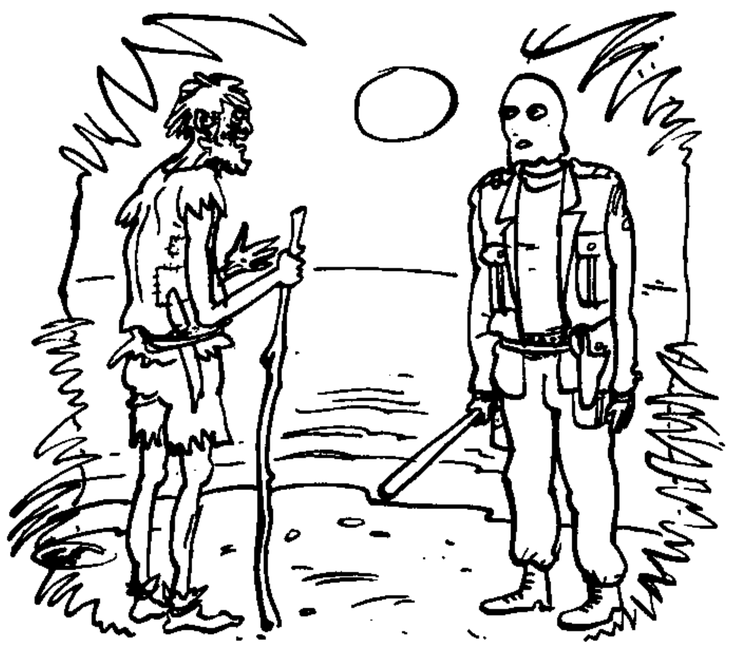

"I shall name you 'Good Friday'"

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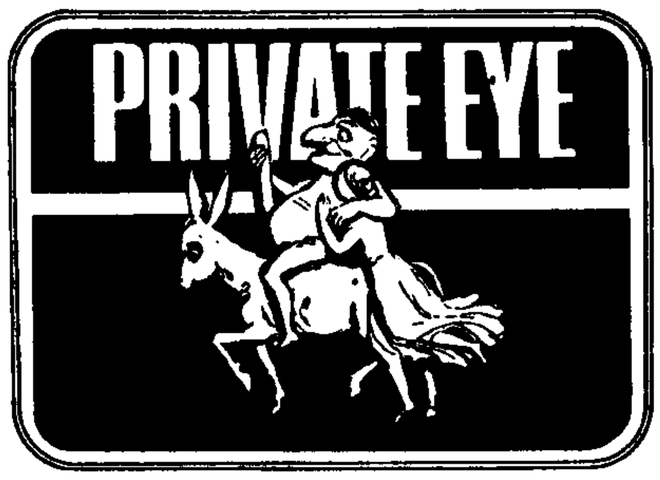


Nasty but Nice...

- *Ulrika, Sadie, Dirty Des, Piers Moron: Street of Shameless special* 4
- *Archerjustsickofhim! Jeff in Bin* 5
- *A word from our sponsor: Labour's Blackpool Conference* 6
- *Libel News on the old Tory Scallywags* 9
- *Hitler's Diary (the real one)* 23
- *Poets cornered: Motion and Duffy* 24

IN THE TEAROOM

OKAY, hands up if you know by heart the key points of the Tories' eye-catching new education policy as spelled out by Damian Green at the party's conference in Bournemouth? Or if you know how sick you'll have to be before Liam Fox would write a cheque to BUPA so you can go private.

No... two out of ten then to whichever clown in central office made the pisspoor decision to schedule the Conservatives' two main public service policy launches on the same afternoon so that each crowded out the other to fill whatever media space was left after Edwina's "hot and squirmy" revelations and Theresa May's shoes had grabbed their fair shares of the headlines.

A conference that was supposed to plant in the public mind the subversive thought that maybe... just maybe... the Tories might just be more imaginative and competent on public services than "new" Labour, in fact ended by sending out the following messages: that Tories are pretty relaxed about gay sex and single mums and don't give two hoots about the euro; that Ms May is a real political star; and that the Norman Tebbit tendency is all washed-up. None of which is true.

Amazingly, the assembled punditry (whose expectations of the Tories are not high) decided, in a gesture of genuine compassion, to declare the whole thing a barely qualified success. Tory MPs, still a little squiffy after all the champagne, allowed themselves to be cheered by this. Now sober and back at Westminster, the 112 Conservative MPs who didn't vote for IDS for leader now know in their hearts they were right and he won't be leading them back to power any time soon. Inevitably, their thoughts turn to treason. Meanwhile, David Davis has been ultra-careful not to speak out of turn. Never underestimate the sheer ruthless-bastardness of a quiet man.

'Urquhart'

LORD Archer's mild punishment – a docking of his earnings from the prison kitchen for two weeks and banning from the prison shop, both suspended for six months was not really a surprise: jail punishments on the whole tend to be reserved for the more serious illicit activities among criminals inside like drug abuse and violence, rather than taking the piss out of the entire system, as perfected by Lord Archer.

However, the disgraced peer *is* likely to have trouble when he comes up before the parole board. Before he can qualify for early freedom he will have to show that he is genuinely remorseful for his crime and is a changed character willing to abide by the rules. This seems unlikely.

PS: Meanwhile, rather oddly, the home office has decided not to call in police to investigate Archer's claims that a convicted double murderer had offered to arrange to bump-off "that bitch of a secretary", Angie Peppiatt. A spokesman told the *Eye*: "That would be a matter for Archer." A dereliction of duty by the police, surely?

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"The question people are asking is: Is 12 October the new 11 September?"

— Simon Calder, travel editor of the *Independent*, speaking to the BBC from Bali about the possible effects on tourism of the Indonesian bomb blast.

THERE are two obvious reasons for the decision of Andrew Hunter, Conservative MP for Basingstoke, to desert the Tories and join the ultra-right Democratic Unionist Party to search for a seat in Northern Ireland.

Firstly, the size of his majority. This was down to 880 in the last election and almost certain to disappear next time. Secondly, Northern Ireland is the nearest thing in sight to the Bantustans, the former puppet states of South Africa in the days of apartheid. Hunter loved the Bantustans. He was for many years the chief parliamentary spokesman for the biggest of then, Bophuthatswana (Bop, for short), and helped organise his colleagues on the Tory benches to go on freebies to the puppet state generously subsidised, to the tune of £26,000 per each MP's freebie, by its mini-dictator, President Mangope.

Altogether 35 Tory and Unionist MPs went on these freebies and all except one returned with glowing reports of the state of the country, its beaches and its gambling dens. Among the 35 were at least three Ulster Unionists. More political freebies to Bop were organised by Hunter than from anywhere else in the world. Then, sadly for all of them, Mangope was deposed and the new South African democracy put paid to the freebies.

Hunter is a former Harrow schoolmaster whose pupils fondly dubbed him "Hitler". Even more eccentric than his support for white South Africa was his decision to take a free trip to Romania in 1985, after which he lobbied tirelessly for Britain to develop closer links with the murderous Ceausescu regime.

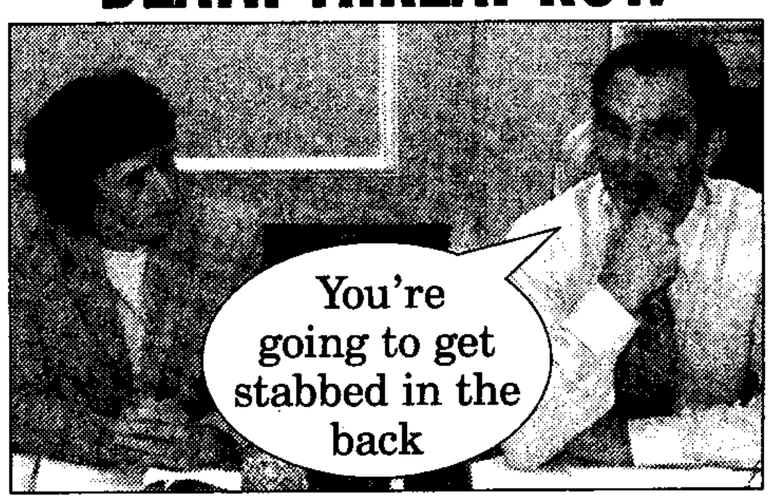
In short, his most notable talent is as a buffoonish defender of hopeless causes which come to grief soon afterwards. First the Tories and now he's throwing his weight behind Ian Paisley…

THERE was general shock at Black & Decker's announcement that it is cutting 1,000 jobs at its Spennymoor plant near Tony Blair's Sedgemoor constituency; and even the PM was moved to say this was "a tragedy".

But what happens to the £1.3m the government gave the firm in regional selective assistance grants in 1999? The money was, after all, handed over under grant category B – "for employment safeguarded".

Black & Decker is adept at squeezing funds from government. It got £1.95m in selective assistance grants in 1995 and more than £3m in the 1980s. Nor does B&D seem to be short of a bob or two: Nolan Archibold, chairman of the US firm, was paid $6,061,878 last year. The previous year he took home $21,404,063.

SCHOOL MINISTER IN DEATH THREAT ROW



Street Of Shame

FLEET Street reacted with appropriate horror when the daughter of actors Jude Law and Sadie Frost swallowed an ecstasy tablet at a children's party in trendy media haunt Soho House.

"The West End club frequented by film stars and Cabinet ministers may have its licence revoked," stormed the *Times*.

Perhaps Times reporters should be dispatched forthwith to question anyone present at Soho House on the nights before the party when it is assumed the ecstasy tablet was dropped on the floor. They might discover that just over 24 hours before the children's party took place, a particularly debauched party was being held at the club by... the *Times* newspaper.

The jollities were to celebrate the tabloid section T2. So decadent was the party that the deputy managing editor Gerry Taylor arrived halfway through the evening to replenish funds with a thick wad of cash. How strange that the *Thunderer*'s hacks should be holding their festivities in the club so shortly before the tablet was found. But surely none of them could be acquainted with such things?

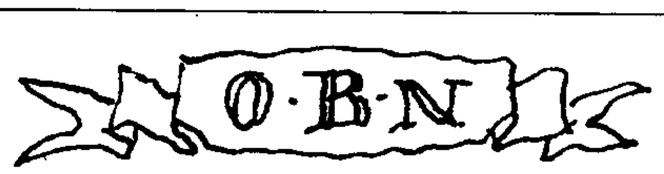
IN a profile of Camelot chief Dianne Thomson, the *Sunday Times* was clear where the blame lay for falling lottery sales. "If the public is disillusioned with the direction of payouts, it dents the lottery and hits sales... most punters want to give to health and education causes."

While public disillusionment at lottery cash being given to asylum seekers was covered at length, there was no space to go into the saga of DNA, the film-making venture given £29m by the draw. It promised to make 16 films in six years – with one year to go, it has managed three. All but one has sunk without trace at the box office, leading to widespread condemnation elsewhere in the press.

But not at the *Sunday Times*. Could this by any chance be related to the news that DNA is currently in talks with Rupert Murdoch's Fox Searchlight about a joint venture which will largely be funded from what's left of that lottery handout?

WHO says journalists decamp to the party conferences to spend three weeks getting blind drunk?

Surely that can't be the explanation for the *Independent*'s reporting of Charles Kennedy's speech at the Lib Dem's jamboree. "His wife, Sarah, was strangely absent", it noted, next to a large four-column photo of her in the audience.



She [Amanda Platell] went on to praise Tony Blair as "one of the best leaders this country has ever seen... who has this incredible combination of normalness and greatness. Combine that with charisma and it's almost unbeatable..."

The Guardian

(Submitted by J.V. Dadswell)

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

MIRROR editor Piers Moron is keen to call his *Sun* rival, alopecia-sufferer David Yelland, a "space alien" at any opportunity; but his coverage of last week's official readership figures show he is the one living on another planet.

"THREE DAYS TO GO TO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION THAT DAILY MIRROR SALES ARE SOARING UP, UP AND AWAY" screamed page two of Tuesday's *Mirror*, alongside a story that Yelland was about to be sacked because of the *Sun*'s approaching "dramatic circulation collapse". The *Mirror*'s unimpeachable source? A "devastating attack" by, er, glossy men's monthly *GQ* which had reported that "rumours persist that Yelland is facing the axe". And how does *GQ* know? It interviewed Moron for a fawning profile earlier this summer and he said so.

This didn't stop Moron devoting half of page 11 the following day to a "NEWSFLASH TO DAILY MIRROR READERS" (handy that), denouncing his "TRIVIA-OBSESSED, JOURNALISTICALLY CRETINOUS RIVALS" and predicting that the figures would "REVEAL WE WENT UP AGAIN IN SEPTEMBER AND SOLD MORE PAPERS EVERY DAY THAN WE DID IN AUGUST." The following day most of page two was devoted to a pisspoor photo-caption joke about Rupert Murdoch ordering David Yelland's sacking, and a promise that there was "ONE DAY TO GO UNTIL OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF THE MIRROR'S AMAZING CIRCULATION INCREASE".

Cometh the hour, cometh the numbers, and Friday's ABC figures did indeed show an AMAZING increase for the Mirror – of 0.26% in a month. Naturally Moron hailed this as "THE success story of the year... our rivals are worried". But the same sort of thing happens every September when people come back from holiday and start buying papers again. And what Moron didn't say was that year-on-year figures show the *Mirror* has *lost* 6.18 percent of readers, whereas *Sun* figures have risen by 4.7 percent. How forgetful of Piers!

GEORGE Best's column for the *Mail on Sunday* is also carried in the Mail group's *Ireland on Sunday* – but there are certain differences.

Best's bite-sized views on football, drinking or his wayward son Callum are dutifully reprinted across the water. But when he writes about Northern Irish politics – as he has done for the last two weeks, accusing Gerry Adams of being "a liar and a charlatan... responsible for many people's deaths" or calling the power-sharing agreement a "farce" – the paper mysteriously finds itself short of space and drops his opinions from the column.

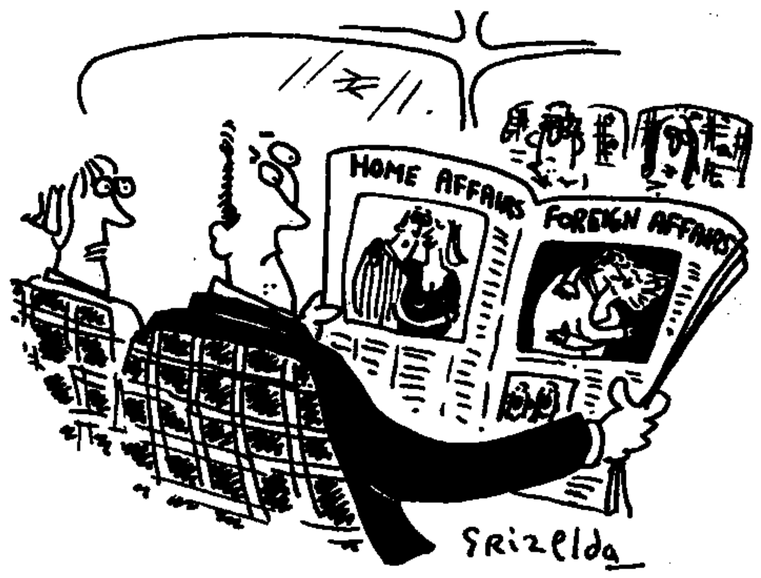
THE pages of the *Spectator* have long been seen as the twilight zone, but recent events have convinced staff they are haunted by ghosts other than those from the Tory party.

The 12 October edition returned from the printer with one cartoon mysteriously completely black. Art editor Michael Heath called 92-year-old cartoonist Bill Scully to assure him this was down to a production error and that he would still be paid – only to learn that Scully had died that very week.

MORE on Richard Desmond's shameless recycling at Express Group.

In our last issue we reported on the remarkable similarity between *OK!*'s supplement *Hot Stars* and the *Daily Star Sunday*'s free mag *Star World*. This was the first many *Hot Stars* contributors had heard about the cloning operation, and several contacted Express Group to ask about payment.

It is a long-standing convention that freelancers are paid 50 percent of their original fee for "second use" of their articles. But normal rules don't apply at Express Group, where those whose work was recycled and sold again have been told they won't receive a penny.



DIRTY DES's journey from pornographer to prude continues, meanwhile. Not only does *OK!* magazine now coyly refer to "f*rting", but breasts are a no-no as well, apparently.

The see-through dress Gwyneth Paltrow wore to this year's Oscars was pictured widely at the time and it appeared again in this week's *Hot Stars* supplement. But there were two important absences: Ms Paltrow's nipples had been digitally removed.

Will Dirty Des's new nipple puritanism be extended to other titles in Express Group's top-shelf stable?

MODESTY CORNER

IT's a received given that the most vicious political cartoonists of the 20th century are Scarfe, Steadman and, latterly, my friend Dr Bell and, someone once told me, me.

— *Martin Rowson,* Cartoon Art News, *September 2002.*

HOW SERIALISATIONS WORK

HOW much are the memoirs of a reasonably successful TV presenter who's been dumped by a bus load of celebrities worth? £16.99 in hard covers to the ordinary punter – but half a million quid to the *Daily Express*, who pledged that amount for Ulrika Jonsson's book and duly set about plugging its imminent serialisation in both the paper and OK! magazine.

Meanwhile the papers who had missed out in the bidding war set about contacting everyone who had a nasty word to say about Jonsson for their own "exclusives" to run as spoilers in the week of the *Express* extracts.

Unfortunately Richard Desmond is keener on having celebs in his paper than he is on handing over large amounts of money, and subsequent dithering over contracts meant that the *Mail*, who had already compiled its "Ulrika is a slut" dossier, was able to step in with £200,000 extra and take the book itself (just as it had done, rather more cheaply, with ex-Spice Girl Mel B's tome the previous month).

Thus it was the *Mail on Sunday* that leapt into print with Ulrika's "exclusive" revelations of gob-jobs with Prince Edward and passion in the refrigerator with Sven Goran-Eriksson, and the *Express* that was left with an "exclusive serial" cobbled together by the features desk, dismissing Jonsson's "tawdry revalations" whilst copying out everything they could remember from their first sight of the manuscript.

The *Mirror*, meanwhile, which hadn't even been in with a sniff of the serialisation rights, splashed its cash on Ulrika's mother Gun, who was quite happy to spill the beans on how unhappy her daughter's manhunting ways had made her. Meanwhile over at the *Daily Mail*, Ulrika was telling Lynda Lee-Potter how she can't forgive her mother for walking out on her as a child. Expect a touching family rapprochement sometime around Christmas – or when the paperback comes out.

JEFF IN BIN

ARCHER SPECIAL

NOT content with shelling out for milord Archer's prison diaries, the *Daily Mail* also seems to have given an informal undertaking that henceforth it'll suspend its disbelief at all the nonsense spouted by Jeffrey and his fragrant wife.

In an exclusive interview with Mary Archer, granted as part of the serialisation deal, the paper noted what sterling chaps her sons are: "Will, 30, is working for an arts company in Washington DC and James, 28, works in the City."

As the *Mail* knows perfectly well, since it reported the story on 28 July 2001, James Archer has in fact been banned from the City for life. An investigation by the securities and futures authority last year found him guilty of a "grave and blatant" attempt to rig Swedish share-prices, and of then creating "an elaborate charade" to cover his tracks when the scam was discovered.

Lady Archer told the *Mail*, again without challenge, that "I am a wholly truthful person." This is the woman who went into the witness box at the *Daily Star* libel trial to boast that she and her husband had a "full" and happy marriage – omitting to mention that she already knew he slept with other women. This may have been a version of the truth; but since Jeffrey's marital fidelity was central to the case, was it "wholly truthful"?

The Archer family's flair for hyperbole and inaccuracy has clearly infected their new chums at the *Daily Mail*. Here's how it introduced the first instalment of his jail diary: "Whatever one's view of Jeffrey Archer – victim, villain or buffoon…" *Victim?* Has anyone ever regarded Archer as a victim?

Complete Krug

Well, perhaps one person: Jeffrey himself. His diary begins moments after he has been convicted for perjury: "Mr Justice Potts stares down from the bench. 'You are sentenced to four years,' he pronounces, unable to hide his delight…" Anyone else who was present in court that day may remember it rather differently. Potts certainly displayed indignant contempt – hardly inappropriate, since it was "as serious an offence of perjury as I have experience of, and as serious as I have been able to find in the books". He also deplored the way Archer had preyed on the weak and vulnerable to concoct his alibis. But there was no delight or glee. "Sentencing you, Lord Archer, gives me no pleasure at all," he intoned – something Archer conveniently omits from his diary.

On his first Sunday at Belmarsh, Archole attends the prison chapel. "We are all ready for the sermon, and what a sermon it turns out to be," he writes. "His [the chaplain's] chosen theme is murder. 'And it all began with Cain and Abel,' he tells us… I later learn that at least half the congregation were murderers, so the chaplain was well aware of the audience he was playing to." More aware than Archer himself, apparently. As we revealed at the time (*Eye* 1033), the sermon was not directed merely at the murderers in the congregation: the moral drawn by the chaplain from the story of Cain and Abel (not to be confused with Jeffrey's bestseller *Kain and Abel*) was that "cheats and liars will be found out – because God is watching you".

Shepherd's Lie

The *Mail*'s justification for serialising Archer's drivel, stressed repeatedly throughout last week, was that the diaries "are an important and salutary insight into the reality of life behind bars… the most extraordinary and revealing first-hand accounts ever written of life in a British prison… His story has much to tell us about the isolation and frustration of prison life."

Really? Here are a few of Jeffrey's amazing insights and revelations. "I am escorted back to my cell and the door is slammed shut. I notice there is no handle on the inside"; "The window has four thick iron bars… No curtains, no curtain rail"; "I am let out of my cell and escorted to the shower room. The shower at my apartment on London's Embankment is something I am particularly proud of… Belmarsh's does not compare"; "Today, I am told, there's a special on the menu – shepherd's pie… I've eaten shepherd's pie at the Ivy and the Savoy but I have never seen anything like Belmarsh's version."

A RARE moment of honesty from Archole came in his account of a dream he had while in Belmarsh. "I'm back at Oxford in the sixties, where I win the University cross country trials, which would automatically ensure that I was awarded a Blue and a place in the team against Cambridge."

Sadly, the dreamboy is disqualified "because they just didn't believe I could possibly have won. No doubt the prison psychiatrist will have a theory about all this."

It might help the shrink to know a few facts: Archer was never "at" Oxford – he attended the semi-independent Oxford Department of Education for a year, and managed to remain a member of the university athletics club for two years after that. While his *Who's Who* entry refers to him winning a blue in 1965, he didn't.

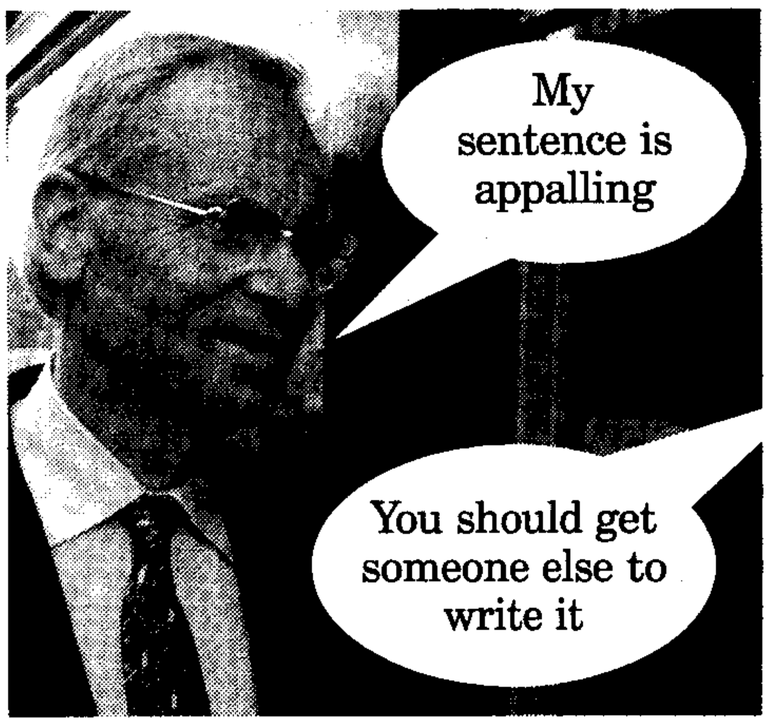
Who would have thought it? Archer's observations are so commonplace they are virtually indistinguishable from those of Ian Huntley (the man accused of murdering Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman), which were published in the *Mirror* last week. "Locked in my cell, I go through my letters. A hundred in the first post, and not one of them condemning me… The public seems genuinely concerned about my plight" (Archer). "It amazes me how many people I don't even know take the time to write to me. I seem to have a bit of a fan club… It helps to know that there are people out there supporting me" (Huntley). "Turkey, beef, ham and stew are on offer but I am unable to tell which is which and can't bring myself to eat any of it" (Archer). "The meals are terrible" (Huntley).

The only people who might be surprised to learn that jail isn't quite as agreeable as the Savoy are *Mail* readers, who have often been told that prisons are cushy "holiday camps". On the very day that it announced its acquisition of the Archer diaries, the paper carried a 2,000-word rant about the "five-star luxury" in which nail-bomber David Copeland was incarcerated.

Champagne In The Neck

Now, all of a sudden, both Archer and the *Daily Mail* seem to be appalled by what the *Mail* calls "the shocking reality of the jail system". In his diary, Archole expresses outrage that so many young offenders are banged up in jails where they mingle with drug dealers and other villains, thus heightening the risk that they'll offend again. "I can hear the right-wingers assuring us that it will be character-building and teach the lad a lesson. What stupidity. It's far more likely that he will become antagonistic towards authority and, once he's released, turn to a life of crime." His opinions are punctuated every few paragraphs with a message to David Blunkett: "Are you paying attention, Home Secretary?"

This rhetorical device will be familiar to those who recall Archer's rabble-rousing speech in the



law 'n' order debate at the 1993 Tory conference, in which he demanded that far more people should be kept in jail when awaiting trial. "While out on bail they'll do it again!" he yelled, to thunderous applause. "And can I add that I am sick and tired of reading about young offenders who put two fingers up to the police because they know that they can go and commit exactly the same offence again without any fear of being punished." There was much more in the same vein before Archer turned dramatically to the home secretary, Michael Howard: "Michael, the time has come for you to stand and deliver."

Same Old Tory

Deliver he did, partly because of the hysteria whipped up by Archer. Shortly afterwards Howard announced dozens of new "tough" measures – including the criminal justice and public order act of 1994, which for the first time allowed judges to tell juries that they could draw adverse inferences from a defendant's refusal to give evidence. And now what do we find in Archer's prison diary, describing a meeting with his lawyer to discuss an appeal? "He's pessimistic about overturning the conviction, despite there being a considerable amount of bias when summing up. Mr Justice Potts continually reminded the jurors that I had chosen not to go into the witness box and give evidence." If Archer realises that he's hoist by his own petard, he doesn't mention it.

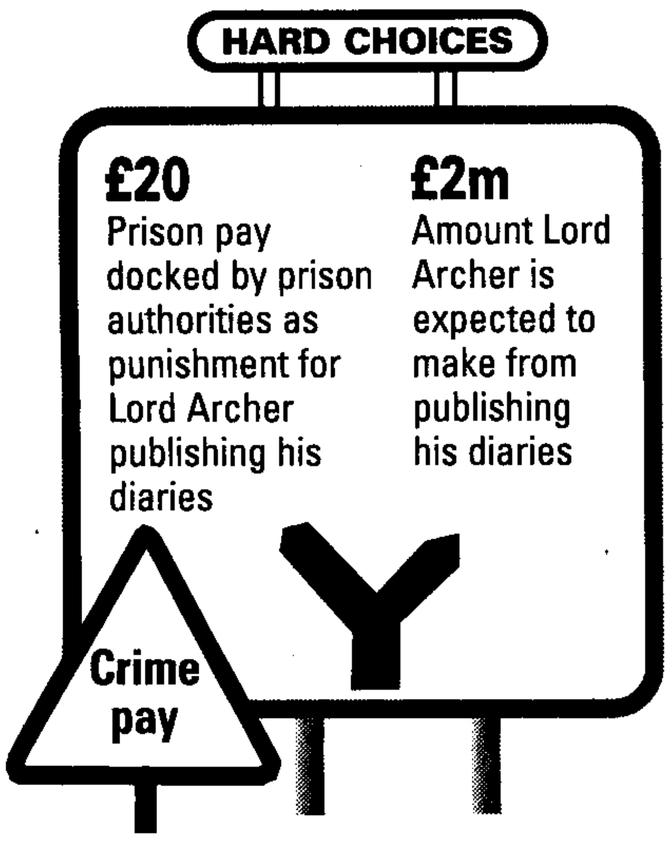
Replying to Archer's speech at the 1993 conference, Michael Howard said that "we shall no longer judge the success of our system of justice by a fall in our prison population. Let us be clear. Prison works." It has certainly worked for Jeffrey. Like his fellow-Tory Jonathan Aitken, he tried to make money by perjuring himself – and then, having been found out, collected a large publisher's cheque for a book bemoaning his fate.

That wasn't what Michael Howard meant, of course. Prison works, he said, because it "ensures that we are protected" from criminals, and makes them ponder the error of their ways. But no home secretary, however draconian, has yet been able to devise a system for protecting the public from the shameless and unrepentant Lord Archer of Weston-Super-Mare.

ONE tradition Archer has maintained throughout his writing career is "borrowing" his plots and stories from others (two of the stories in his collection *A Twist in the Tale* were blatant rip-offs of stories by lesser known writers who had sent Archer copies for his comments).

In his prison diary he charts his friendship with the unlikely-named "Fletch", a convicted murderer and aspiring writer. While they were together in Belmarsh, Fletch read Archer a draft of his life story, detailing his childhood as a victim of paedophiles.

"What Fletch has read to me could not have been made up. It is so dreadful it has to be true," writes Archer, detailing how emotional it made him. Still, only one of the men in the cell has a book contract. "He has sworn me to secrecy but I come to the conclusion that his story should be widely known," writes Archer before telling all at length to thousands of readers.


HARD CHOICES
£20
Prison pay docked by prison authorities as punishment for Lord Archer publishing his diaries
£2m
Amount Lord Archer is expected to make from publishing his diaries
Crime pay

HOME secretary David Blunkett should really be moved to environment, so keen is he on recycling ideas.

Last week he was planning to crack down on defendants who cause costly delays by not turning up in court. They should be locked up, he said – ignoring the fact that this is already enshrined in the bail act and omitting to mention that only 16 percent of cases are ever delayed by defendants. (In 84 out of 100 cases it's the police or prosecution who cock-up.)

In February Blunkett called for tougher penalties for car-jackers, even though a conviction for robbery already provides for a maximum life sentence. And as the *Eye* recently reported, his call for immigrants to swear an allegiance ignored the British nationality act 1981 which already requires any would-be Brit to go before a commissioner of oaths and "swear by Almighty God to be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, according to the law".

When Blunkett isn't recycling existing legislation he is salvaging discredited Tory ideas like identity cards and his most recent inspiration – cutting off welfare support to would-be refugees who put in asylum claims after they have entered the country and not immediately on arrival.

When Michael Howard and Peter Lilley tried a similar trick in 1996, it was thrown out by the courts. Lord Woolf, then master of the rolls, said it was wrong to assume all claims not made upon arrival were bogus; and the 1948 national assistance act was specifically designed to avoid destitution for those in need. Then, "new" Labour were furious about the move and accused Lilley and Howard of "trying to starve genuine refugees out of the country". Funny old world, eh?

"They're accusing us of spying"

UNIVERSAL torpor is gripping the London Labour party as ballot papers land on doormats across the capital in the search for the party's London mayoral candidate.

Reg Varney-lookalike and mayoral hopeful Tony Banks is under strict instructions from party chairman Charles Clarke not to lose his rag with Ken Livingstone; while the Livingstone-backed Nicky Gavron has been told to be nice to the unions and chippy party members. Her job is to pretend that she really wants to be the party's candidate and avoid reminding anyone that if she does become the standard bearer, her real job is to recommend a second vote for the people's Ken.

Meanwhile rank outsider Bob "Hoskins" Shannon, a hard man from the engineering wing of the Amicus union, is busy pretending to be the real pretender to the mayoral chair – but without much success. So far the contest has been rancour free; but so contagious is the yawning among the comrades, the hope must be that "Reg" does finally blow his stack to liven things up.

He has never forgiven Leninspart for a series of treacherous acts dating back to their time together at the old GLC. "Reg" is particularly narked that everyone seems to have forgotten it was his brilliant idea to have a new mayor of London – and that one of the sternest critics of this madcap scheme at the time was Ken Livingstone!

ENCOURAGED by Capita's recent triumphs overseeing individual learning accounts (ILAs) and computerising Britain's criminal records (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*), the cabinet office has decided that henceforth all civil service pensions will also be paid by Crapita.

In a letter to a backbench MP, cabinet office minister of state Douglas Alexander explains that after a (secret) tendering process this represents the "most economically advantageous proposal". There will, he writes, be no difference to the pension paid and no information about pensioners will be made available to anyone except the provider.

The only difference will be that Crapita will make a spanking profit out of a previously publicly-run and reliable service. How much, if anything, will the government or Crapita make out of the deal? That is "commercial in confidence" and absolutely secret. The *Eye* welcomes news of the forthcoming "efficiencies" in the service.

LABOUR CONFERENCE SPECIAL

VISITORS to the Labour party conference in Blackpool were assured that the bad old days of corporate sponsorship of fringe meetings and ministers were over. How odd that the most notable feature of the conference was... corporate sponsorship of meetings addressed by "new" Labour ministers!

● Energy minister Brian Wilson spoke up for Energywatch, the consumer watchdog, on the topical subject of "putting an end to energy mis-selling". (The meeting was sponsored by TXU energy, which has recently been criticised by Energywatch for energy mis-selling.)

● "Think while you drink" was the theme of the hottest party of the week, sponsored by Coors beer (the drinkers) and hosted by the "new" Labour thinkers from the Fabian Society and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). The Coors dynasty is best known in the United States for funding right-wing, not-very-Fabian Republicans. Another funder of the Coors party was Nirex, which also provided the money for a Young Fabian reception addressed by foreign secretary Jack Straw. Nirex is a government body dealing with nuclear waste. Its role at the conference seems vague – until you realise its chairman is Sir Ken Jackson, deposed boss of engineering and electrical union, Amicus.

● The *Guardian*'s prima donna Polly Toynbee was obviously unabashed by the revelation in the *Eye* that she had spoken at a fringe meeting sponsored by a subsidiary of the corrupt and bankrupt Enron. She was up again with home secretary David Blunkett at a meeting on racial equality sponsored by celebrated egalitarians and privatisers, United Utilities. Nor was Polly's former host, Wessex Water, at all embarrassed by the fact it was owned until recently by Enron. It paid for the lavish reception thrown by Labour's earnest thinkers at the Fabian Society.

● Other notable sponsors included the arms firm EADS (helping Jack Straw and Gisela Stewart speak on "How Europe should be governed"); notorious baby milk firm Nestlé (Sally Keeble on Africa); chocolate and fizzy drinks giant Cadbury Schweppes (Baroness Ashton, education minister for the early years, and promoter of the healthy schools initiative not best known for its promotion of chocolate and fizzy drinks). Rural affairs minister Alun Michael and trade minister Nigel Griffiths also spoke at a meeting on the rural economy in which drinks and canapés were provided by those champions of the hunt, the Country Landowners' Association.

● Bankers and wankers were in concert throughout the week. Labour's think tank IPPR had its hotel paid for all week by the British Bankers Association. And the *Eye*'s favourite tax avoidance outfit KPMG sponsored a meeting addressed by that sworn enemy of tax avoidance, treasury minister Ruth Kelly. Not to be outdone in tax avoidance, home office minister John Denham spoke at a meeting where sponsorship and refreshments were provided by Barclays (which also paid for Labour's "diversity disco", addressed by chief secretary to the treasury Paul Boateng, who for once was not booed).

● As usual, though, the main sponsors were the big private firms who want more of the NHS action. Health secretary Alan Milburn spoke all week at meetings sponsored by firms including Lodestone Patient Care, Aventis, Merck Sharpe and Dohme and even KPMG. Somehow his speech forgot to mention the meteoric rise in KPMG's fees for the PFI-built Dartford Hospital, up from an original £152,000 to nearly £1m. Junior health ministers John Hutton and Sion Simon spoke at a meeting organised by the ultra-right Adam Smith Institute and paid for by the big private health provider PPP. The subject: "Can Gordon Brown save the NHS?" Its sponsors hope very much that he can't.

THERE was much criticism from delegates about the many groups who paid for stalls at the Labour party conference this year. But none was louder than that of John Prescott, who harangued one stallholder for several minutes during a lull in proceedings on Wednesday.

Was he having a go at one of the many environmentally-unfriendly corporate giants who had bought their way into Blackpool? No. The deputy prime minister reserved his ire for War On Want, whose stall was promoting the charity's Sweatships campaign against the abuse of workers' rights at sea.

Prescott heatedly told the volunteer on duty that he regularly worked 18-hour days on Cunard liners, and it never did him any harm: War On Want ought to find better things to spend their money on than promoting workers' rights.

In an example of joined-up government thinking, the next day Tony Blair gave War On Want the award for best charity stall at the conference.

HOW TRANSPORT POLICY WORKS

March 1997: "Britain is crying out for a coherent, national transport strategy which tackles congestion," says Andrew Smith, Labour's shadow transport secretary. "Our strategy involves winning lots more freight on to rail."

March 1999: 50,000 lorry drivers' jobs are at risk, claim organisers of a truck protest that blocks central London.

April 2001: "What a change from only two years ago," gushes the Freight Transport Association. "Vehicle excise duty down, fuel-duty down... The industry can at last feel that it has got the government on the right side of the fence."

June 2002: Latest government figures show a million-tonne decline in freight lifted on to trains.

October 2002: "The transport industry is facing a major shortage of lorry drivers," says the Freight Transport Association.

BECKS RECEPTION FOR BLAIR

AS *Eye* 1059 reported, Labour-run North Tyneside council earlier this year named the Japanese construction group Kajima its preferred bidder for a £33.5m contract to refurbish four run-down schools.

This was despite Kajima's appalling record on human rights which dates from the days when it ran a slave labour camp in Japan during the second world war, right up to its current involvement in Burma, where in the past decade it has worked on at least 25 projects including tunnels, roads and dams. Slave labour is the norm on such projects in Burma.

Last year Kajima signed a PFI contract to build and run offices for the department of the environment, food and rural affairs (Defra) and the Inland Revenue in Cambridge as part of a £100m redevelopment project.

And in November last year Kajima, in a consortium with Norwich Union property, won the right to redevelop the former Silvertown Dock in East London in a project that will be ultimately worth £1bn. Happily for Kajima, the London Development Agency gave it the rundown site for nothing. By one of life's little coincidences, the man heading the consortium is David Taylor (*Eyes passim*), formerly John Prescott's special adviser on regeneration and former chief executive of English Partnerships, the government's regeneration agency, of which the LDA is part. So everyone's happy. Just don't mention Burma!

FISHY BUSINESS

APPEARING outside a supermarket near you between 11am and 12noon on Saturday 26 October, anti-fish farm protesters will be dishing out leaflets warning consumers of the implications of buying farm salmon.

Supermarkets in more than 80 UK cities and towns are to be targeted by anglers fed up with the Scottish executive's useless environment minister, the fish farmer's best friend, Ross Finny.

"One day, son, all this will be foxes"

ENERGY FAILURE

THE senior civil servant who admitted publicly that his department had blundered in cutting support for renewable energy has paid the price: he has been shunted to a less prominent role and replaced by someone from the direst enemy of renewables – the gas/oil section in Aberdeen.

John Doddrell was director of the sustainable energy policy unit at the department of trade and industry when, on 29 March 2001, he read out a prepared statement at a public sitting of the select committee on science and technology. With the then Energy Minister, Peter Hain, sitting beside him, he said:

"The decision to discontinue the government's wave energy R&D [research and development] programme in 1994 was economic. It did not look promising. The decision was taken in the light of the best independent advice available. With the benefit of hindsight, that decision to end the programme was clearly a mistake."

Without the benefit of hindsight, some people got it right first time round (including the *Eye*). It is thought to be the first time the DTI has made such a confession. It probably did not meet with enthusiastic approval from the grey men at the top, who have fiercely protected the interests of the gas and oil companies.

They sat tight until now. Then came the announcement that Mr Doddrell had moved on to become Director of Change Management at British Trade International, whatever that means. In his place, in the key position of head of the renewable energy team, comes Iain Todd, currently head of oil and gas industry development in Aberdeen, the Klondike of the north, where he was working in close association with the oil and gas companies. Will he remain sympathetic to their concerns?

WAR CRIES

THE first casualty of war is truth, or so it's said; and in the coming war with Iraq a key figure in charge of what will pass for the truth is our very own Alastair Campbell.

According to *Newsweek*, White House communications director Dan Bartlett is "getting the band together" to win the propaganda war; and Campbell will be a key member of the band. Another will be Tucker Eskew, who came to London to help Tony Blair's chief spin doctor with public relations during the Afghan war, and who was chief spokesman for George W. Bush's heroic presidential campaign in Florida.

HOW smart will America's smart weapons be in Iraq? A leaked letter from US chief weapons tester Thomas Christie reveals that some of them simply don't work.

The letter, written on 1 August and leaked to the Project on Government Oversight, says: "I am concerned about an apparent trend by the Navy to deploy an increasing number of combat systems into harm's way that have not demonstrated acceptable performance during adequate operational test and evaluation."

Top of his list of faulty arms was the "Joint Stand-off Weapon" (JSOW), a missile launched from aeroplanes to targets on the ground. It often carries hundreds of cluster bombs to the target. Christie insists it has been deployed "prior to demonstrating acceptable performance".

He also reveals that a sighting system for America's "Super Hornet" jet doesn't work. "Its performance during the April operational assessment was not satisfactory. For example, only two out of seven laser-guided bombs demonstrated acceptable performance and fleet reliability is unsatisfactory."

THE White House plans to occupy Iraq after Saddam Hussein is deposed and administer the country's oil reserves comes from Bush special Middle East adviser, Zalmay Khalilzad.

Khalilzad was of course previously an adviser to oil firm Unocal.

THE WORLD OF OVERWEIGHT CATS

MARCONI chairman Derek Bonham was reticent at the recent shareholders' meeting about why the collapsed technology company's directors gave in so readily to its bankers last March.

Marconi had £1bn in cash and an agreed, non-negotiable £18bn overdraft facility that it could draw down at any time. These might have allowed the company to survive, or at least negotiate better terms for shareholders in the restructuring. But in talks with the banks in March, the company agreed to tear up the overdraft agreement and set most of its cash aside. Prior to this Marconi had used some of its cash to buy back its bonds cheaply, slashing debts. This benefited shareholders and sent the shares rising. But in March, oddly, Marconi simply volunteered to stop doing this.

Since then Marconi's directors and bankers have both done very well at shareholders' expense. Directors have agreed to give the banks, led by HSBC and Barclays, 99.5pc of the shares. Current shareholders were not even allowed to vote on the deal. Bonham threatened to throw the company into administration if they tried to stop it. Meanwhile the banks have agreed to let Marconi chief executive Mike Parton, operations director Mike Donovan and finance director Steve Hare share a £2m bonus, on top of their £1.3m in salary.

Marconi's former bosses Lord Simpson and John Mayo left the company more than a year ago. Public anger at their huge payoffs has obscured the sums being collected by the new team, whose key members had been on the board for years and must share the blame for the company's collapse. Between April 2000, when Marconi's fortunes peaked, and the financial year end next March, Mike Parton will have collected £2.9m in salary and bonuses, and Donovan £2.3m. During that time shareholders have lost more than £20,000m.

WATERWORLD

NO SOONER had shameless bosses at Kelda, aka Yorkshire Water, reported a huge rise in profits and an even bigger rise in executive salaries (see *Eye* 1060) than they were lobbying for permission to increase prices by 3 percent.

Kelda says it needs a cash injection to reduce the number of sewage pollution incidents and doesn't want to dip into profits, dividends or bonuses. Thus its captive customers can pay.

Kelda isn't the only water company lobbying to raise prices; and all use the excuse that they could make proper commercial profits if only the regulator Ofwat would remove their shackles. The reality is that Ofwat already gives them a licence to print money in a monopoly market.

The proof is in the small print of Kelda's accounts. Behind the headline figures, these reveal that Kelda's regulated core water business has an operating profit of 40 percent against turnover, despite the Ofwat price cap. Kelda's non-regulated businesses, where it is free to charge market rates, turns in an operating profit of half that. Yet its executives pay themselves huge bonuses as if these profits were the result of commercial nous in a tough marketplace.

Kelda's water and sewage customers – who can hardly shop around – are already subsidising shareholders and executives by many millions of pounds every year. Will Ofwat have the guts to tell Kelda what it can do with its request to turn the screw even further?

Blairism (E6)

***See also*: Thatcherism**

Routledge Dictionary of Economics

FTVE

Brookside (Channel 4)
Fame Academy (BBC1)

THERE'S never been an art-form as obsessed with time as television is. There's a large clock on the studio wall and a stop-watch in the PA's hand. The finished show is given a place within a 24-hour grid. Grown men in politics and journalism seriously believe that the world ends when a news bulletin shifts its place by half an hour.

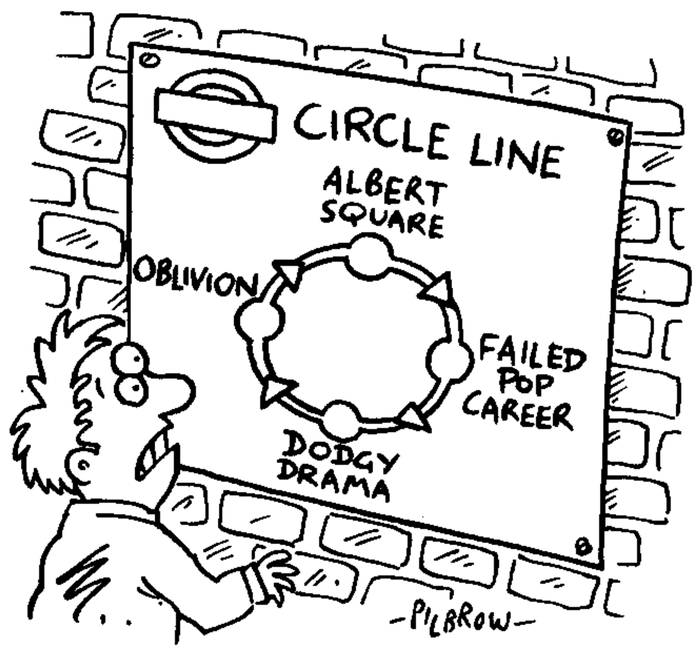
But the clock-watching is understandable because timing does matter in TV. The Tory party regicide drama *House of Cards* had the luck to premiere in the week when Margaret Thatcher went and made the names of those who made it. Conversely, the plays scheduled for the weekends when Di and the Queen Mum died might as well never have been produced.

And last week seemed to throw up examples of an old show which went on too long and a new show which came along too late. **Brookside**, which has been shunted off to weekends to see out the last year of its deal, contains two terrible warnings to television executives. The first is the danger of over-milking your ratings cows.

What did for *Brookie* was that the channel, in the last ten years, has demanded more and more episodes with ever more sensational storylines to keep the channel's audience-share high. A supposedly average Liverpool housing estate has come to be populated by incestuous, lesbian, drug-addicted, thrice-married, multi-kidnapped, frequently-sieged, once-clinically-dead, intermittently murder-tried folks who have been spared only attempted alien abduction.

The BBC may smirk at Channel 4's misfortune, but it should look hard because precisely the same over-farming threatens *EastEnders*, the cornerstone of the BBC1 schedule (as well as ITV1's only remaining banker, *Coronation Street*). If *Brookside*'s audience can fall by 80 percent in a decade, no one should assume that Albert Square or Weatherfield have a lock on their core 13 million. TV executives have tended to act like oil barons – believing that their major resources would last for ever – but they need to become environmentalists.

Equally worrying is the other factor in *Brookside*'s demise. Mark Thompson, the new Channel 4 chief executive, allowed the soap to float around the schedule to accommodate *Big Brother*. The result was huge ratings during the summer but a terrible slump as soon as



BB finished. *Brookside* has never recovered from viewers not knowing where to find it.

This is a vital lesson because Thommo was the leader among a breed of execs who believed that, because of Tivo and other video technology and the development of internet self-scheduling, it mattered less and less when a network put a programme on. But, like many big ideas in TV, this turns out to be nonsense. ITV1's ever-shifting *News At Ten*-Ish is losing audience, just as the Liverpool soap did when it became *Brookside*-ways. Meanwhile the flourishing Channel 5 screens the same stuff at the same time night after night, just like the old-fashioned networks used to.

If *Brookside* is looking in trouble after 20 years, **Fame Academy** appeared doomed after 20 minutes. In a different way, this is a victim of timing. Last year, when Gareth Gates and Will Young were battling it out in the charts and reality game shows were giving Channel 4 their biggest ratings lift for years, it seemed that the BBC desperately needed to jump aboard that limo with the blacked-out windows.

Crossing *Pop Idol* with *Big Brother* to create *Fame Academy* – in which an aspiring pop star will be given a celebrity lifestyle for a year, subject to the votes of rivals and the public – might not have been original (courtesy, Head of Entertainment Jane Lush, enthusiastically backed by the great populist Greg Dyke), but it was just about defensible. The main worry was that it wouldn't be trashy enough. Mindful of the BBC governors' dislike of reality TV, and the fact that for the same £4.5m they could have had *two* series of *Panorama*, the corporation injected a Blairite mantra of education-education-education. The format is half Pete Waterman and half Lord Reith, with the star-seekers being taught the skills of performance by experts.

Regrettably, *Fame Academy* finally reached the screen a week after Hear'Say (the first reality TV-created pop group) disbanded and the week before Pepsi dropped Gareth Gates from its advertising and Virgin Radio announced a ban on playing records by telly-manufactured acts. Watching *Fame Academy* now – with its desperate wannabes bigging it up for the cameras – you just want to switch off and listen to a star who experienced a decent period of being unknown. Cynically created as a bandwagon show, *Fame Academy* turned out to be the backlash one. Timing is all.

'Remote-Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

Judgemental, BBC1

Sophie Raworth: British politics. Who was the only female member of the Gang of Four?
Contestant: Myra Hindley.

Steve Wright Show, BBC Radio 2

Wright: What is the largest rodent in North America?
Contestant: The great white whale.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Who wrote the 19th-century novel *Far From The Madding Crowd*?
Contestant: Timmy Mallett.
AR: The British composer of The Sea Symphony and the opera *The Pilgrim's Progress* was Ralph Vaughan... what?
Taxi driver no. 467801: Chaucer.

MEDIA NEWS

THE latest charlatan to be exposed by the BBC's *Watchdog* is one Marie France, a clairvoyant who sends out random mailings offering personalised horoscopes and suchlike.

As *Watchdog* indignantly pointed out, her letters "are very carefully constructed to manipulate people when they are at their most vulnerable and their weakest". The item ended with a guest appearance by our old friend Jonathan Cainer, the millionaire Fleet Street star-gazer, warning viewers to be very careful about whom they trust.

Jonathan is something of an expert on spiritual charlatans, of course, having for many years been a follower of the ludicrous Maharaji, the chubby self-styled God formerly known as the Guru Maharaj Ji. He also knows a thing or two about money-grabbing astrologers: curiously, however, Cainer neglected to mention his own premium-rate horoscope phone lines, which earn him a fortune by peddling twaddle to the weak and vulnerable.

Perhaps "Marie France" will now repay the compliment by appearing on a *Watchdog* exposé of Cainer's lucrative tosh-factory.

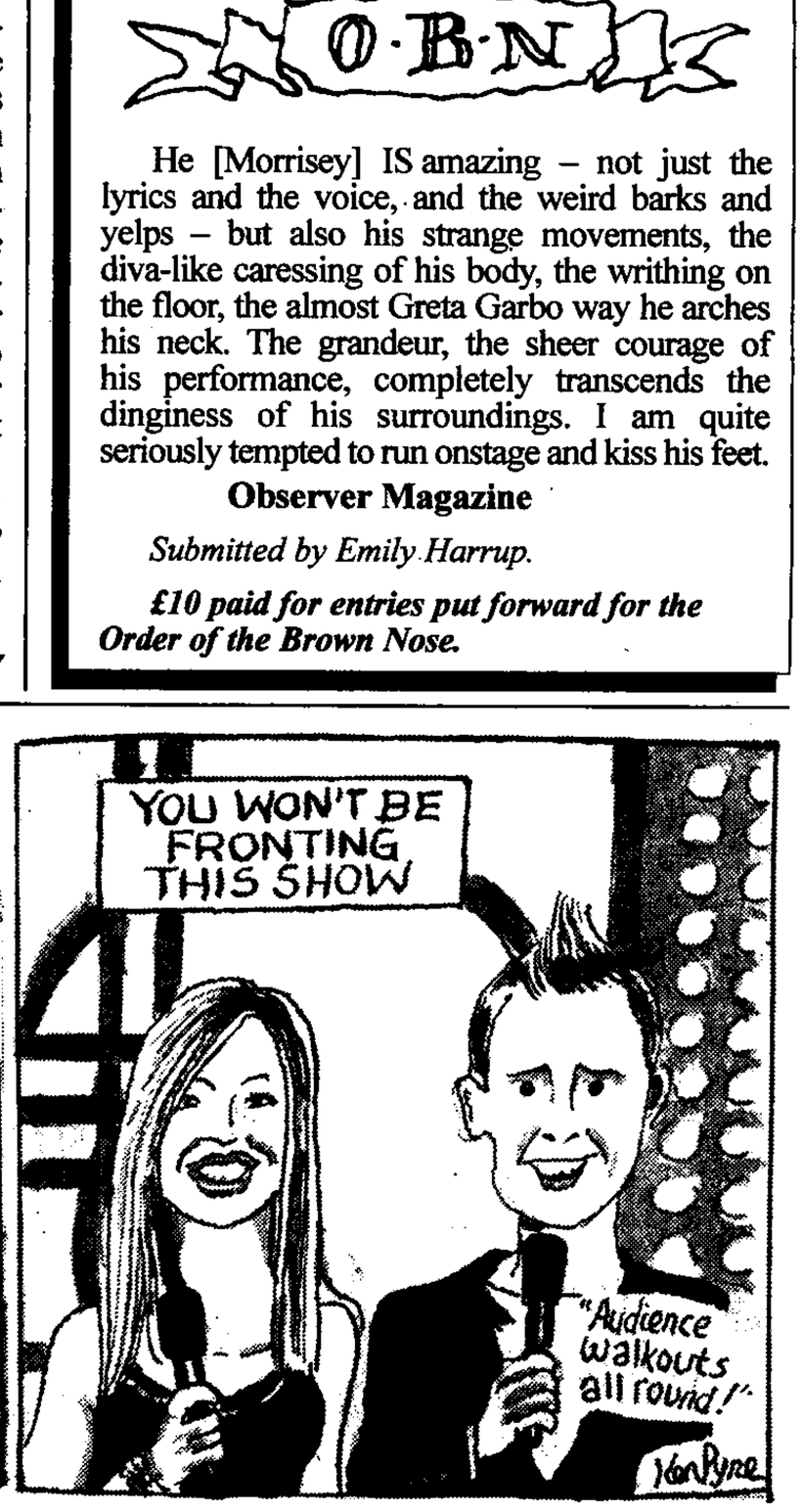
O·B·N

He [Morrisey] IS amazing – not just the lyrics and the voice, and the weird barks and yelps – but also his strange movements, the diva-like caressing of his body, the writhing on the floor, the almost Greta Garbo way he arches his neck. The grandeur, the sheer courage of his performance, completely transcends the dinginess of his surroundings. I am quite seriously tempted to run onstage and kiss his feet.

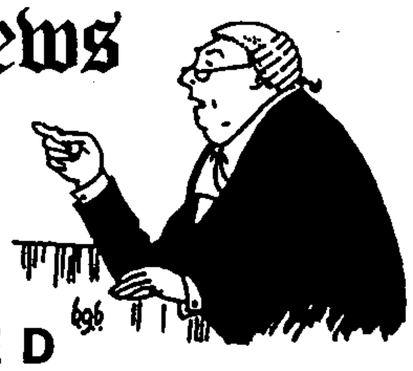
Observer Magazine

Submitted by Emily Harrup.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.



Libel News



OLD TORIES REVISITED

JOHN MAJOR apparently lied in his 1993 libel actions against *Scallywag* and the *New Statesman*, when he instructed his lawyers to say there was "no truth whatsoever" in the allegation that he had had "adulterous relationships". However, since the cases never went to trial and were ended with a "full and final settlement", a perjury prosecution would be a non-starter.

But what of the woman who has belatedly exposed his duplicity, Edwina Currie?

Interviewed by the *Observer* magazine in 1989, Charlotte Rampling said that while preparing for her role as a fictional female Tory politician in the film *Paris By Night* she had studied real politicians such as Margaret Thatcher and Edwina Currie. A furious Currie wrote to the *Observer* claiming that, unlike the Rampling character, she had been happily married for 17 years and did not have a lover. She then sued for libel. "I thought it was outrageous," she told the high court jury. "It upset me very much. I have tried hard to make sure my home and family are secure." Her husband, Ray Currie, also testified on her behalf.

The *Observer* had to pay £5,000 in damages, plus tens of thousands in costs. "Newspapers must be careful what they say about public figures and their personal lives," Edwina said after the verdict. "I have shrugged off most of the junk written about me over the years. This was different because it referred to my marriage and family life, which could be seen to be at risk for a public figure. The divorce rate among my colleagues is higher than the national average… I wanted to point out that I am aware of these pressures and I did not want them to affect my family. I hope I have had reasonable success."

Now she lucratively reveals that not only had she recently concluded a four-year affair with John Major at the time of the *Observer* article but that she had had another lover. Following the Archer and Aitken precedents, no doubt Inspector Knacker is already on the case.

MEANWHILE porn baron David "the Slug" Sullivan – who was the main shareholder in *Scallywag* magazine – is asking "sex-cheat John Major" to repay some of the money the ex-PM won in his libel case.

Sullivan accepts that Major's affair with Clare Latimer did not take place, even though *Scallywag* said that it did. Nevertheless, had Sullivan and his lawyers known about the Edwina Currie affair at the time "we would have taken a more robust legal stance and we would not have a loss of £50,000 still outstanding. I intend to pursue John Major and force him to pay that amount to charity."

How very moral of the Slug. Clearly this cannot be the same David Sullivan who once spent almost three months in jail for living off the immoral earnings of prostitutes.

Even more ludicrous is the posthumous canonisation of *Scallywag*'s late editor, Simon Regan. A long, heart-tugging piece in the *Daily Mirror*, based on an interview with Regan's half-brother Robin Wilson, claims that Major's libel suit had "catastrophic results for Robin's family… Simon died in 2000, his health permanently damaged by the scandal."

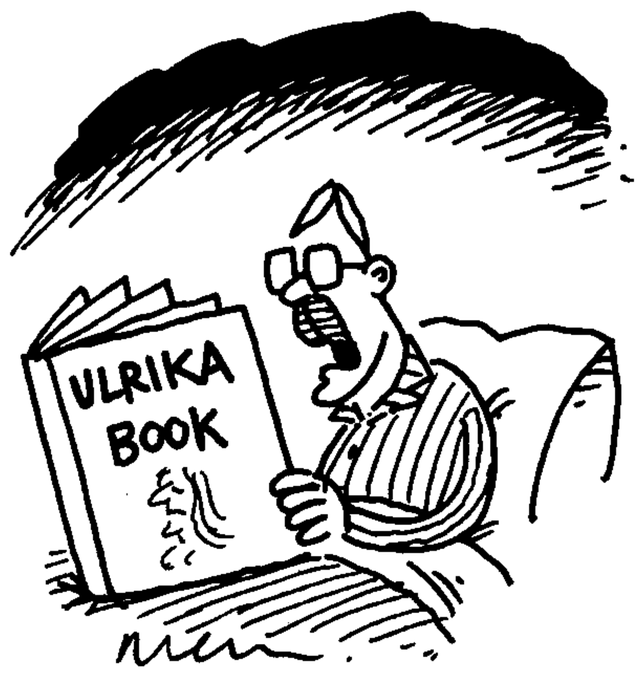
A likely story. A clue to the real cause of death is given by Wilson's admission that his brother was "an old-fashioned Fleet Street, foot-in-the-door journalist… All his business was done in bars." What actually killed Regan, as anyone acquainted with him will know, was the fact that he had been more or less continuously drunk since the 1960s.

THERE has been predictable gloating from Dirty Desmond and Express Newspapers over Jeffrey Archer's agreement to pay £2.7m to cover the damages and costs (plus interest) he obtained from the *Daily Star* in 1987.

And, once again, we have heard the tragic tale of former *Star* editor Lloyd Turner, whose "premature death" from a heart attack was blamed on the stresses of the case. His widow's local paper, the *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, reported the settlement two weeks ago under the headline "Widow Vindicated as Lying Lord Pays Some of His Dues".

Some vindication. As the *Eye* has pointed out before, the original article published by Lloyd Turner – detailing Archer's regular "kinky sex" sessions with prostitute Monica Coghlan – was a fiction worthy of the master story-teller himself, and could never have been defended successfully even if Archer hadn't resorted to perjury. Even Monica Coghlan admitted as much. "The only true part is that I went to bed with Jeffrey Archer," she told the high court. "The rest of it is sheer fantasy." She described her nephew Tony Smith, the *Star*'s only source, as "a compulsive liar who fantasises a lot. He's spun them a yarn and they've fallen for it and printed it."

And what of the suggestion that Turner was killed by the trial? After leaving the *Star* he continued to work in Fleet Street, and didn't have his fatal heart attack until 10 years later



"Fancy falling for a boring man with glasses!"

UK STYLE

7.00am Bargain Hunt **7.30** Bargain Hunt **8.00** Bargain Hunt **8.30** Bargain Hunt **9.00** Bargain Hunt **9.30** Bargain Hunt **10.00** Bargain Hunt **10.30** Bargain Hunt **11.00** Bargain Hunt **11.30** Bargain Hunt **12.00** Bargain Hunt **12.30** Bargain Hunt **1.00** Bargain Hunt **1.30** Bargain Hunt **2.00** Bargain Hunt **2.30** Bargain Hunt **3.00** Bargain Hunt **3.30** Bargain Hunt **4.00** Bargain Hunt **4.30** Bargain Hunt **5.00** Bargain Hunt **5.30** Bargain Hunt **6.00** Bargain Hunt **6.30** Bargain Hunt **7.00** Bargain Hunt **7.30** Bargain Hunt **8.00** Bargain Hunt **8.30** Bargain Hunt **9.00** Bargain Hunt **9.30** Bargain Hunt **10.00** Bargain Hunt **10.30** Bargain Hunt **11.00** Bargain Hunt **11.30** Bargain Hunt **12.30-1.00** Bargain Hunt

The Times TV Guide

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Elton John Major

GOING LIVE

WHEN *Newsnight* went live to Anita McVeigh outside Downing Street on 9 October for news of talks between Irish premier Bertie Aherne and Tony Blair following Sinn Fein's alleged spying spree, Aherne had already left the building.

"Did he have anything to say on the way out?" asked a hopeful Jeremy Vine in the studio.

"No, he didn't – and I don't think there was anything he could add to what he said on the way in," revealed the plucky news hound.

Plugged In

ITN's *"News" at Ten* continues to scrape the barrel.

Last week reporter Nina Nannar fronted a fawning item announcing the news of actor Bill Tarmey's return to "Britain's favourite soap" — the audience-deficient *Coronation Street*. ITN is of course contracted to the ITV network to provide "news" of this quality. Any more gratuitous plugs in news programmes gratefully received…

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

SUPERMODELS

AGENCY LOUNGE
"ALL THESE WANNABE SUPERMODELS ARE QUEUEING FOR AN AUDITION"...
GOD, THEY THINK THEY CAN LEARN TO BE A MODEL IN A DAY !!!
RIDICULOUS !!!
MODEL BEHAVIOUR
IT DOESN'T TAKE THAT LONG DOES IT ?

SIGNAL FAILURES

How they are related Pt 3

TRAVELLING by train is a nightmare for people living near the west-coast mainline because of the botched Railtrack-Virgin modernisation. But at least they still get a good TV picture at home. For the time being, anyway.

Senior engineers are now saying Virgin's new electric trains for the line can cause interference on television screens, possibly many miles away. Signallers' CCTV screens for watching level crossings may be affected, as could signalling equipment. One engineer reckons the fault is so serious the full Pendolino fleet won't be in use until 2007.

As an accountant Richard Bowker, chairman and chief executive of the strategic rail authority (SRA), knows better than the engineers, though. He said this month that Virgin "will shortly be introducing the new Pendolino trains, with faster and more frequent services"; and that the west-coast project failed because "the infrastructure upgrade on which everyone's forecasts were based has not been delivered". He forgot to say that under the original franchise deal, 45 Pendolinos were to be available for service by June but none is ready yet.

Could Bowker's policy of glossing over this delay (see last *Eye*) be related to his decision to hand Virgin Rail (former co-chairman: R. Bowker) thick wads of public cash on the grounds that *Railtrack* failed to come up with the goods on time? If the tracks had been ready for 125mph by June, as planned, Richard Branson couldn't have run anything like the service he promised because he still relies on the old 110mph trains.

On 3 October Bowker was still insisting Pendolinos would eventually run at 140mph; but six days later even he admitted defeat. This is embarrassing for his pal Jim Steer, a transport consultant who is now the SRA's managing director (strategic planning). As a consultant, Steer advised Beardie he could run extra trains at 140mph over the country's busiest mainline, with little regard for the impact on other services. Hence the Pendolinos have a higher specification than now required, but Steer and Bowker have now ensured taxpayers rather than Beardie will pay the unnecessary leasing premiums.

Steer, who has even less experience of railway management (zero) than Bowker, is proposing a new way of maximising mainline capacity which starts with him and Bowker specifying the long-distance trains required. Anyone worried about their local services can become involved via "feedback of local issues". It's just coincidence Virgin is the biggest long-distance operator and doesn't run local trains.

Steer says the SRA has no money left for local upgrades – and has decided not to ask Gordon Brown for any more. Instead he's criticised the government's multi-modal studies on major road bottlenecks for asking the impossible from the railway (ie expecting balanced road and rail investment). Curiously several of these studies were produced with the help of, er, Steer Davies Gleave – Steer's consultancy firm.

Why is the government allowing two men with scant rail-management experience and strong ties to Britain's biggest rail cock-up to fill the railway's top three posts? And why has it set the blunt target of 50 percent more passenger miles by 2010 – meaning one person going 500 miles by train (saving one car journey) is worth more than 40 people going 10 miles (about 25 car journeys)?

The result is that local trains, useful for tackling traffic congestion and what Labour calls social exclusion, lose out to long-distance operators like Virgin – whose policy is to price people off the railway at peak travel times "even though some morning peak trains are quiet" (*Eye* 994). Already various regional services have been undermined to accommodate Virgin Cross-country's short extra trains (*Eye* 1062). Bowker still wants Virgin to run more west-coast services with nine-carriage Pendolinos, rather than lengthen trains to their previous 12 or 13 carriages so that fewer are needed and local services aren't squeezed.

● RICHARD BOWKER took the side of Stagecoach (which owns half of Virgin Rail and employs his dad) in its dispute with the RMT union over pay and disciplinary policy early this year. He waived the fines SWT should have paid for cancellations during the strikes because the situation wasn't management's fault (*Eye* 1047).

The strikes were triggered by SWT demoting train driver Greg Tucker for allegedly breaking safety rules. Now an employment tribunal has ruled Tucker was wrongfully demoted after being singled out for his union activities. It dismissed much of SWT's evidence as "incredible", "risible" and "implausible, even absurd". One key witness appeared to give evidence "without regard for truth and solely with an eye to where the advantage lay". A separate tribunal found that SWT unfairly sacked another worker after accusing him of intimidation during the strike.

So will Bowker now revise his opinion of the management's innocence and deduct from SWT's subsidy the fines he waived – or is it now official policy to support workplace bullying with public money?

'Dr B. Ching'

DOING THE ROUNDS

THE United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust (UBHT) has reacted swiftly to the *Eye*'s exposure of events surrounding the death of Tom Cooke (see last *Eye*).

In a press release on 2 October, it said: "The Trust has provided a full explanation of the issues raised by Ms Devine [Tom's mother, Lauren] and has disclosed all information and medical records requested by Ms Devine and those acting on her behalf... UBHT was very concerned by the suggestion that it has withheld or altered information. A thorough investigation means that we can categorically refute these allegations."

This is at odds with Lauren's experience and with that of Gordon Cooke, Tom's father. They have been forced to spend £4,000 on solicitors' fees to prise Tom's medical records out of UBHT. Miraculously they arrived on 8 October, a week after the *Eye* was published and six days after the press release.

Despite repeated requests, they have yet to receive any record of the first research trial carried out on Tom, where there is an issue over the manner in which Lauren's signature was obtained; while UBHT has already admitted destroying the video of a second research trial following the family's formal request for disclosure.

Additionally, records of posthumous meetings with UBHT staff are missing. Lauren and Gordon also dispute that they have had "a full explanation of the issues".

Tom was born with a severe brain injury when the fact that he was in a compound position, and hence could not be delivered vaginally, was not picked up until very late in labour. Had this been spotted earlier, the tragedy could have been avoided. Andrew Whitelaw, professor of neonatal medicine at the University of Bristol, has stated in writing that Lauren "did not want to have internal examinations and therefore accurate information on the position and lie of the foetus was unavailable".

Lauren strongly refutes this. In her previous pregnancies, she had internal examinations (VEs) whenever appropriate, and would not have declined the offer of any intervention if she knew it was important to her or Tom's health. In addition, Lauren's labour records have clearly and openly been altered retrospectively, with "temperature declined" (as it had already been taken) changed to "VE declined" once the damage to Tom was known.

Having done an obstetric job, M.D. is well aware of the stress upon midwives, the difficulty of assessing the lie of a foetus (I've often got it wrong), and the traumatic effects to everyone when an emergency isn't spotted. Irrespective of whether an error occurred in Tom's case, there are clearly communication issues about stressing the importance of VEs to get an accurate picture of the presentation, and what parents are told about the risks of home birth (should Lauren have been advised against it, having had three pregnancies in successive years?) Lauren and Gordon want evidence that these issues have been addressed to prevent a future tragedy.

After Tom's birth he was enrolled in a randomised trial run by Whitelaw comparing the nursing of severely brain-damaged babies at different temperatures. Lauren signed a consent form for this, but was on her back, recovering from a general anaesthetic having undergone major surgery and with a haemoglobin of half the normal value and thought she was consenting to Tom's treatment.

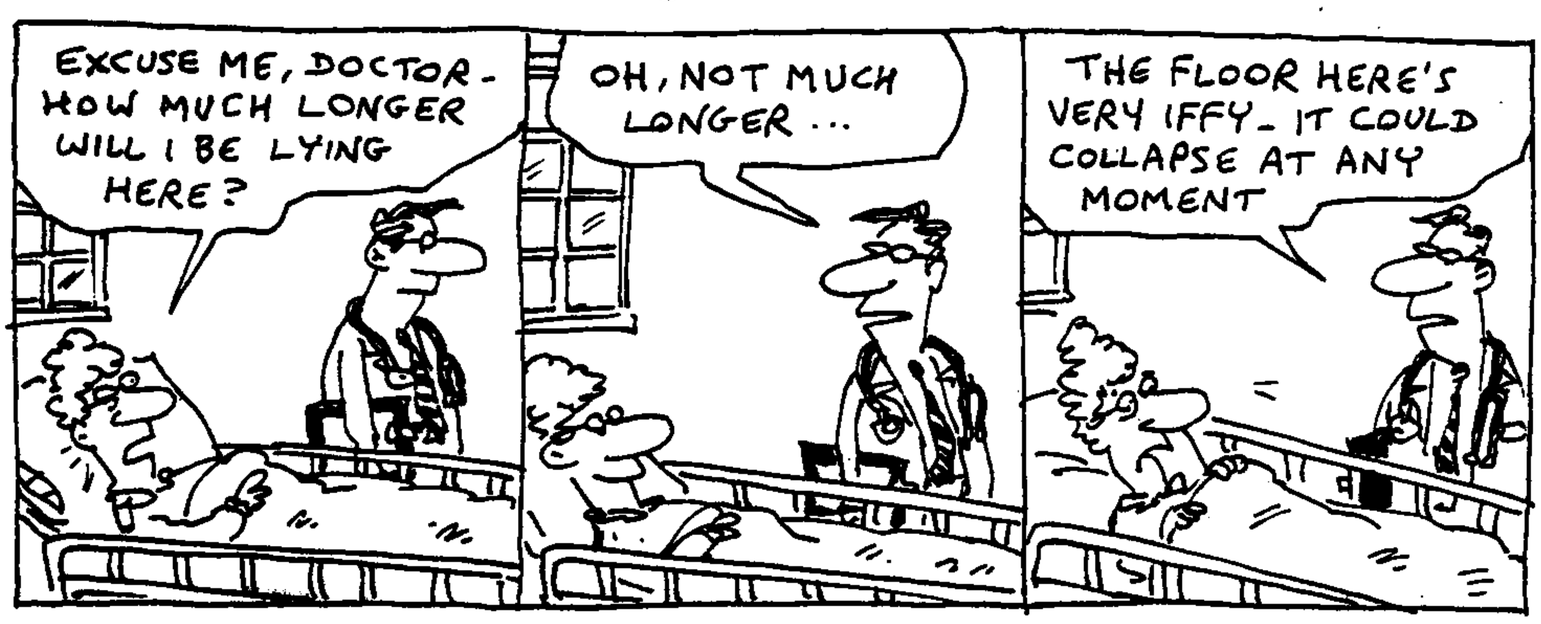
Lauren and Gordon do not believe she was capable of giving informed consent and want to know what steps have been taken to improve the process of gaining consent. They also want to know how Tom died, given that his feeding and liquid tubes were removed a considerable time before his death. They would also like an investigation into the numerous bizarre allegations made by UBHT against Lauren, particularly the "child protection" issues (see last *Eye*) which were completely unsubstantiated but have caused the family intolerable stress on top of their suffering.

As Professor Whitelaw admits: "This is reminiscent of Kafka's *The Trial* and the old Soviet Union." Lauren wants to clear her name and have the record of the allegations expunged, and yet UBHT clearly feels the case is closed, and the department of health has chickened out of an investigation. Labour has set up so many new bodies claiming to make the NHS accountable to patients (CHI, NCAA, NPSA, CGST), you'd think on of them could provide some independent answers to these very legitimate questions.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


EXCUSE ME, DOCTOR - HOW MUCH LONGER WILL I BE LYING HERE?
OH, NOT MUCH LONGER ...
THE FLOOR HERE'S VERY IFFY - IT COULD COLLAPSE AT ANY MOMENT

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

SHEIKH DOWN

WHILE Barking and Dagenham's top officers were on a "team building" exercise this summer dressed as Arab sheikhs, "de-stressing" themselves on beanbags in a chill-out zone or flying off to US conferences at taxpayers' expense to talk management gobbledegook (*Eyes passim*), the government's social services inspectorate (SSI) was about to spoil the fun.

A damning report by the SSI into the Labour council's children's services concludes that B&D failed to implement measures recommended as long ago as 1997 to protect vulnerable children in its care. Failings include staff shortages, underfunding, a confused referral and assessment system and many children being placed with foster carers outside the borough – with an attendant lack of visits to ensure children are safe.

Foremost among the SSI's 24 recommendations is the need for low staff morale to be improved by recruiting permanent instead of agency staff. Exactly why B&D finds it so hard to recruit front-line staff is not clear. Last year it spent £1.87m on recruitment ads – three times as much as neighbouring Havering.

The council may be short of social workers, but at least chief executive Graham "Club Class" Farrant has improved staffing in one vital area. Since he joined the council two years ago the number of highly paid chief officers has increased from 30 to 41. They may not be a lot of use to vulnerable children, but they look very nifty prancing round a sports hall dressed like a bunch of extras from *The Desert Song*.

● **WHO says local government careers aren't exciting? Paul Dobson started his time at Wear Valley district council as a baths attendant, but by 2001 had become leisure and marketing director on £35,000. In April that year he became the council's £45,000 director of community services following an unadvertised "restructuring". Alas, the new job hasn't proved enough of a challenge, and Dobbo – despite being off sick nearly all this year – is heading for Sunderland as the city council's £85,000 director of community and cultural services, with responsibility for, among other things, sports and leisure development. This comes just weeks after Sunderland celebrated the award of £719,074 of lottery dosh from Sport England towards a new water sports centre, which will, according to Sport England's regional director, Judith Rasmussen, "play a major role in the economic regeneration of Sunderland". Is this the same Judith Rasmussen who shares a home in Durham with Sunderland's new sports supremo, Paul Dobson? Er, yes! Small world, isn't it?**

SPOT OF ROTHER

GRAHAM GUBBY, Tory leader of Rother district council, clearly believes that any publicity is good publicity. After the last *Eye* told how Rother rashly agreed to underwrite a jazz festival in Bexhill-on-Sea and lost up to £70,000 as the town's geriatric residents stayed home in droves, Gubby gave an upbeat interview to the Brighton *Argus*.

He conceded that the festival had only managed to sell 1,200 tickets instead of the hoped-for 12,000, but had nevertheless "put Bexhill on the map". The clincher, Gubby appeared to be saying, was being exposed to ridicule in this column. "When," he asked defiantly, "was the last time Bexhill was mentioned in *Private Eye*?"

For the record Bexhill has had a number of mentions in recent years. The most prominent was in March 2000 (*Eye* 997) when "Nooks & Corners" highlighted the "malicious stupidity" of, er, Rother district council's philistine plan to turn that dilapidated modernist masterpiece, the De La Warr pavilion, into a theme pub. Happily that fate has been avoided, thanks to the determination of the local Pavilion Trust and £6m of lottery dosh to fund its restoration.

TEN YEARS AFTER

VICTORY at last for Marion Vidolich, 25, an epileptic and cerebral palsy sufferer who was confined to her bedroom for nearly 10 years thanks to a combination of dodgy builders and Labour's "flagship" Newham council.

In May 2000 *Eye* 1001 told how Marion and her parents had been waiting since 1992 for a stair lift to be fitted so that Marion, who needs round-the-clock care, could be moved up and down stairs to her bedroom. Newham agreed a grant for the work to be done, but cowboy builders – approved by the council – disappeared with £20,000 after pulling the family's house apart.

"There was no heating, a partly constructed bathroom, a toilet that did not pull and exposed wires everywhere," said mother Edith, 59. The family were unable even to get into their back garden because of the damage done by the builders to the windows and door. Instead of accepting responsibility, Newham council spent 10 years and much council taxpayers' money arguing the toss in court.

After the *Eye*'s story appeared in 2000 Newham undertook to "fund an appropriate disabled facilities grant scheme for Marion" as soon as one could be agreed between the two parties, but refused to make good the work. Two years on it has at last made a £61,000 grant available. Said Edith: "We have been forced to fight for 10 years for something that was rightfully ours all along."

DEN OF INIQUITY

IN AUGUST we tipped Staffordshire Labour councillor Dennis Heptonstall as an outsider for Rotten Boroughs' coveted brass-necked councillor of the year award after he became £5,000-a-year chairman of the county council's new health scrutiny committee on top of the £6,000 he gets as a member of the county council and £2,500 from East Staffordshire borough council.

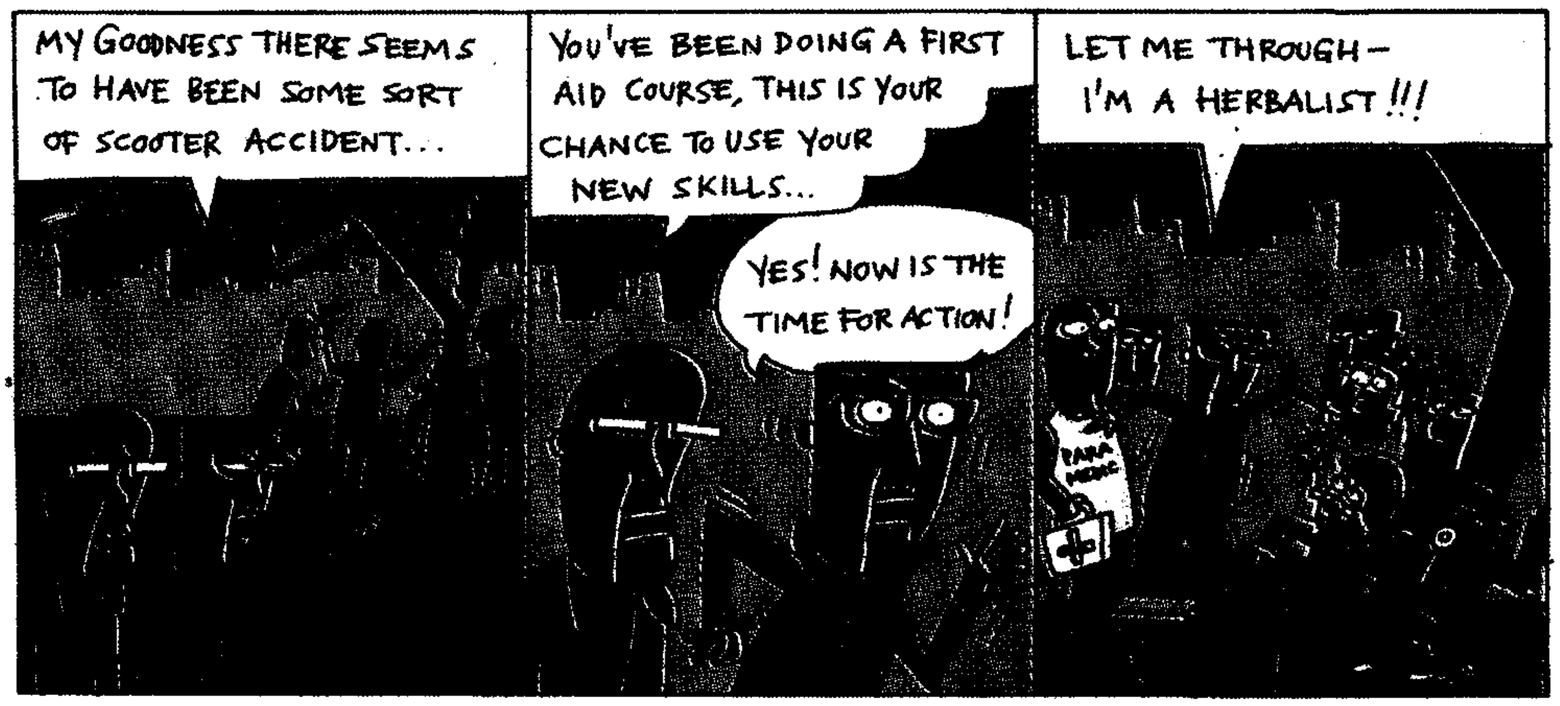
Why? Because Cllr Heptonstall was not long back from spending three months abroad in a camper van with fellow ESBC councillor Penny Perry (*Eyes passim*). The couple, who are married (but not to each other), threw ESBC, where they had been respectively leader and deputy, into confusion with their sudden and unannounced departure for Uganda. Council taxpayers, who clearly have no sense of romance, felt this was not on, especially as both continued to draw their allowances.

When Perry then joined Heptonstall on the health committee, one reader suggested that the brass-necked award should be expanded to include a doubles category. As the *Eye* went to press the local *Burton Mail*, which has been running a "Den and Pen must go" campaign, was counting the votes in a poll of readers. Out of more than 4,000 votes cast, those who said the couple should resign outnumbered those who said they shouldn't by a margin of more than 130 to one – despite the fact that one unidentified Heptonstall supporter had, with the aid of a photocopier, gone to the trouble of "voting" 60 times!

● **STORIES in successive editions of the *South Yorkshire Times* feature the heroic efforts of brothers Terry and Tony Sellars to stand up for their impoverished community. First Terry attacks Doncaster council for failing to adopt a number of streets in Conisbrough, thereby leaving them without full council services. Then Tony urges the council to restore a vandalised war memorial. The council replies that it hasn't got the money. One of the reasons Doncaster council may be short of money, of course, is the habit of many of its members over the years of dipping their sticky fingers into the public purse. Not least two convicted former councillors by the name of Sellars!**

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


MY GOODNESS THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SOME SORT OF SCOOTER ACCIDENT...
YOU'VE BEEN DOING A FIRST AID COURSE, THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO USE YOUR NEW SKILLS...
YES! NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION!
LET ME THROUGH – I'M A HERBALIST!!!

DOWN ON THE FARM

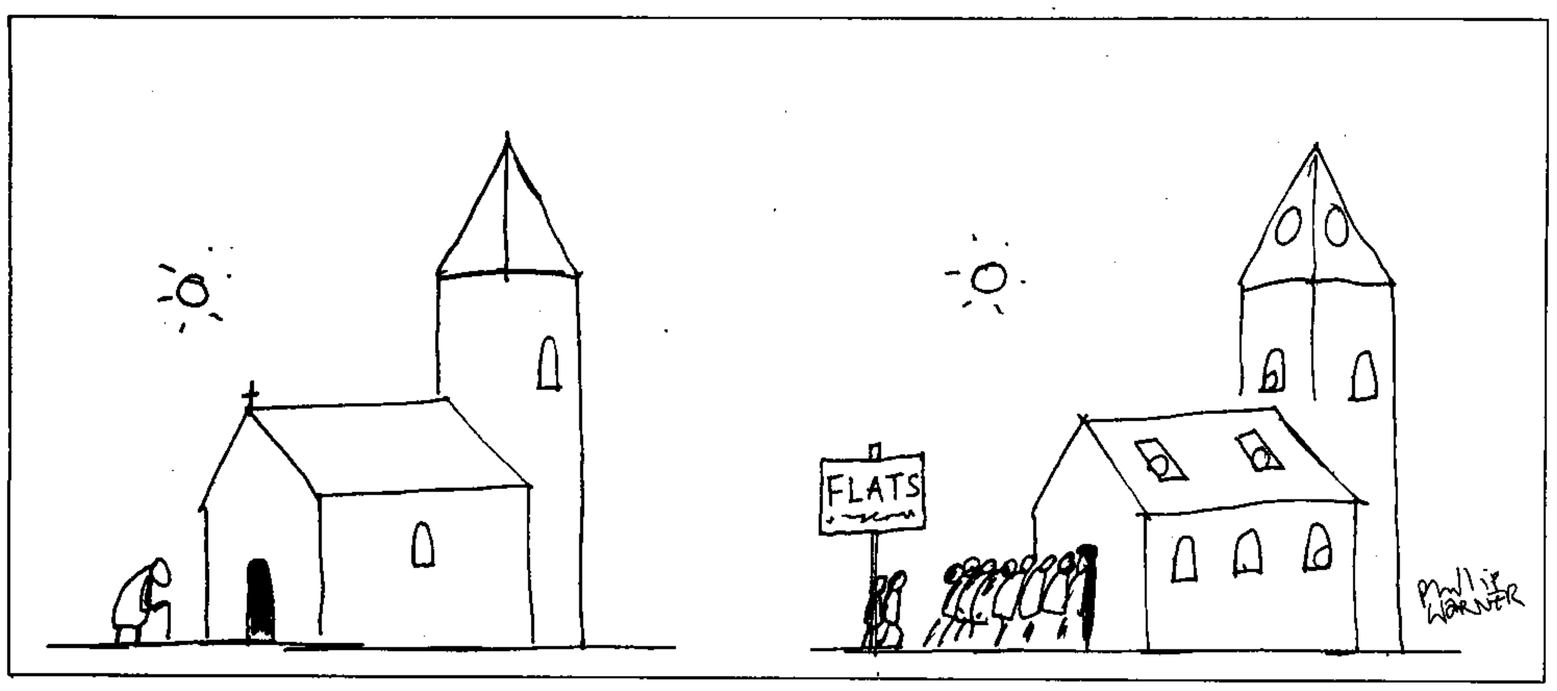
NOW that we can find better countryside in France, Tuscany and Centreparcs, and cheaper food from Brazil, Thailand, Kenya and the Ukraine, do we really need the British countryside and, if so, what for?

The answer is: crap. Something which everyone, from town and country alike, produces every day. It has to go somewhere; and the time-honoured British was was to dump it at sea. That's now out of the question; so it has to go back on the land and this is not always easy. Even though it is treated, regulated and completely safe, there are always people who complain when it is spread anywhere near them. And now there is another threat.

Each of the big grain traders has suddenly decided that it will not buy grain for human food if "biosolids" have been used on the land on which the cereal was grown. This goes beyond all existing protocols, without consultation, and is known by the technical term of "covering their own backsides".

This has made some farmers less inclined to use it at all – and that's the point. Rather than "go on strike" and pour milk down the drain, as militant farmers' groups have threatened, it would be cheaper and more effective to refuse to take sewage sludge. Then all of Briton would be in the shit together.

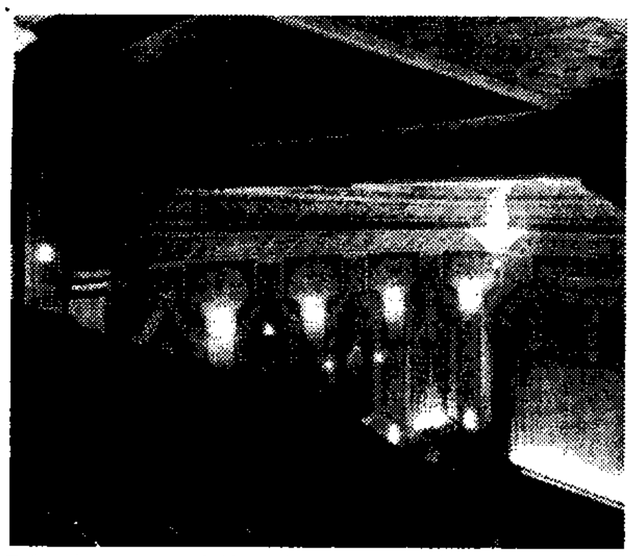
'Gumboot'



NOOKS and CORNERS

TWO years ago, and with some fanfare, culture minister Alan Howarth accepted a recommendation to list a further 30 of England's best surviving cinemas. The recommendations were the result of serious research and had first been announced at a conference organised by English Heritage to launch its publication: *Picture Palaces. New life for old cinemas.*

Cinemas can be tricky buildings to protect: the nature of cinema and its audience have changed over the last century; often the buildings are more interesting internally than externally; and sometimes they're vast and intractable. Nevertheless the then chairman of English Heritage was surely correct to write: "By listing these buildings, we will make sure that their special interest is taken into account should any proposals be made to alter or demolish them... Many cinemas and former cinema buildings are not only unique, but a much loved part of our culture."



Almost immediately the listed cinema owners went squealing to the government, whose new minister Baroness Blackstone obliged by delisting several of the new candidates for protection. One was the former Paramount, now Odeon, in Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Built in 1931 to the designs of London architects Verity & Beverley, and with an interior "in the French Watteau style" created by the Hollywood designer Charles M. Fox, this had been described by English Heritage as "the best surviving Paramount cinema in Britain, with well-composed façade and rich interior with Lalique glass fittings" – despite the fact it had been subdivided by Odeon Cinemas in the 1970s. But the DCMS insisted it was only of local interest and that the extent of the interior alteration had not been made clear to the minister at the time of listing (which was not the case).

The DCMS insisted that "economic reasons were not a consideration" in delisting when, of course, economic consideration was the paramount and only possible reason for easing the process of gutting or demolishing this large city-centre building – especially as a report in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of Town Planners* stated that listing would impede Odeon Cinemas' plan to open a multiplex cinema elsewhere in Newcastle.

The briefly-listed Odeon site is close to the city's glory, Grey Street (recently voted the most beautiful street in England and whose survival owes much to listing), as well as to attractive development opportunities, and is of potential high value: ideal for a department store – which is perhaps why Newcastle city council was unmoved by the removal of statutory recognition for one of the diminishing stock of historic buildings in the city.

None of this is surprising. What is disturbing is that the Halpern Partnership, acting for Odeon, refers to a document issued by the DCMS entitled *How to appeal against listing – a guide for owners and occupiers* as its "rough guide" for delisting. In response to a question from the Northumberland and Newcastle Society, which has been campaigning for the Odeon, the DCMS stated that "there is no formal process for appeals against decisions on listing and delisting, but we will consider fresh evidence at any time".

In the case of the Newcastle Odeon, no fresh evidence has been offered which undermines the original correct expert recommendation by English Heritage. Again we see "new" Labour's indifference to the built heritage and its anxiety to accommodate the interests of big business.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

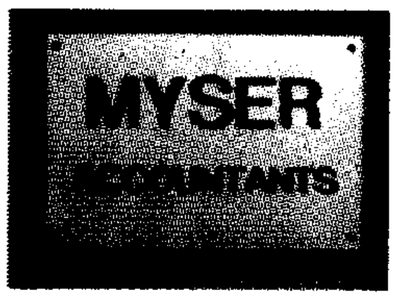
It looks like war's inevitable...
I'm afraid so.
And there'll be no holds barred!
NEWS
NEW SAATCHI GALLERY TO OPEN CLOSE TO TATE MODERN

I-SPY

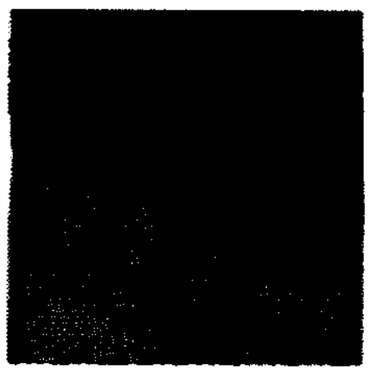
Submitted by S.E. Harrington, Mark Brown, Tony Wells, Hugo Pooley.
£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Kendal, Cumbria

New South Wales



Thetford, Norfolk



UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

ON 17 February next year Londoners will wake up to London mayor Ken Livingstone's £5 congestion charge for motorists. But amid all the hoo-ha over Ken's tax on motion, few people are asking the most pertinent question of all: will it work?

The question is particularly pertinent when you realise the company which is installing and operating what is arguably the most ambitious computerised traffic management scheme in history is none other than Capita, which made such a balls-up computerising the Criminal Records Bureau.

The task would be Herculean for even a competent firm; but for Crapita it may prove a megabyte too far. Around 250,000 vehicles will enter the zone each day. Six hundred digital cameras around and within the zone will have to read the number plates of each one and send the pictures to banks of computers at undisclosed locations across the city.

Each number plate, when broken down into its simplest elements, needs around 100 kilobytes of computer memory to describe it. Multiply that by 250,000 (in fact far more because many vehicles will enter and leave the zone more than once in a day and each may be caught by several cameras) and you're talking about a gargantuan amount of computer processing power: between 150 and 200 gigabytes a day.

Each number plate must be cross-referenced to that day's list of congestion-charge payers (motorists have until midnight to pay, assuming the call centres can handle all the payments) and the miscreants then have to be cross-referenced via a link with the central databank of registration numbers, owners and addresses at the DVLA in Swansea.

This is a tall order. If all goes well, it should work fine and dandy. The trouble is, it almost certainly won't. In Singapore, which also has a congestion charge scheme, the system is interactive: each car is fitted with a transmitter which tells the computers when it is entering the zone. The £200m London scheme will rely on "dumb" cars and computer visual recognition – a notoriously tricky beast to get right.

Capita talks about "X-Wave Technology" and its advanced Automatic Number-Plate Recognition (ANPR) system, which sounds very impressive. But if the system goes down (which it will), or if there are software glitches, thousands of cars won't be processed. Add to that the fact that dirty number plates, foreign vehicles and simple nose-to-tail traffic will confound the cameras, and it is a recipe for disaster.

As soon as people learn that they stand a good chance of getting away with it, they will stop paying. Then the whole thing will collapse.

'Boffin'

Court Circular

THE MORNING after *Panorama*'s allegations of corruption in the sport of kings, a videotape of the programme was winging its way over the pole to catch up with the Queen during her tour of Canada.

Naturally Brenda is concerned about allegations by the Jockey Club's former head of security, Roger Buffham, that the club knew about a string of race-fixing scandals but did nothing about them. But she is furious that, as the club's patron and a leading owner, she was kept in the dark by the club's top brass and had to wait to see the broadcast like everyone else.

Jockey Club officials had twice been to the high court in an attempt to prevent the programme being aired – a fact that Brenda only discovered from the racing press. This led to awkward encounters for Jockey Club bigwigs with Brenda at race meetings in the weeks preceding the broadcast as she demanded answers and assurances – and an explanation as to why she hadn't been pre-warned. Brenda was particularly annoyed about allegations levelled against jockey Keiron Fallon, who rides in the royal colours and who was filmed getting in a strop with the *Panorama* reporter while wearing them.

Following the broadcast Buckingham Palace was instructed to obtain details of the Jockey Club's side of the story. And chief executive Christopher Foster – who endured a heavy grilling during the programme – faces an even harder one next time Brenda collars him on a racecourse.

'Flunkey'

RACING NEWS

COVERAGE of the Jockey Club corruption scandal sparked by *Panorama* omitted one crucial matter which illustrated even more than the refusal to act against bent jockeys linked to organised crime just how divorced those who run racing are from the real world.

Whistleblower Roger Buffham, the Jockey Club's former head of security, had been embroiled in an earlier much more serious and embarrassing criminal investigation which the Jockey Club chose to ignore. In 1997 – before the role of drug trafficker Brian "The Milkman" Wright, a close associate of north London's Adams crime family, in corrupting jockeys was first exposed – Buffham was questioned by the serious fraud office on behalf of the South African authorities as part of their investigation into Wouter Basson, the man in charge of the apartheid regime's chemical and biological weapons programme.

Buffham had helped "Dr Death" acquire equipment for the South Africans, unrelated to chemical and biological warfare, and in 1988 had effectively laundered some £2.5m of their money through his Lloyd's bank account in return for a 1 percent fee.

Buffham, seen by prosecutors as a vital witness, gave a statement to the SFO but refused to testify at Basson's trial claiming he was in fear of his life. The trial judge stated that it was clear that Buffham, a former army officer, had agendas of his own and that it would not be unfair to state that there was a strong possibility as a witness that he would not be completely frank with the court.

Basson was acquitted earlier this year – a ruling that stunned the prosecution – however, the Jockey Club never considered that Buffham's role in all this might be grounds for dismissal.

David Blunkett also revealed yesterday that employers in the hotel and restaurant sector and the food manufacturing industry were to be allowed to recruit less killed workers from abroad from early next year.

Grauniad

Letters

Private Eye

DEFRA to reason

Sir,

Your article in the 16 September issue implied that the 12,000 "administrative penalties" which were levied by DEFRA in one year were due to detection of deliberate fraud by farmers. Since there are only about 100,000 active farms in this country, didn't anyone stop to think that this would be an extraordinary level of fraud?

The truth is much worse and is one of the long-festering sores which causes anger and depression for countless farmers. The mind-boggling complexity of the paperwork which goes with trying to claim any subsidy from DEFRA leads to huge numbers of simple errors, which are often penalised by "administrative penalties".

I know of one farmer who, struggling to cope with quite severe illness coupled with major machinery breakdown, was three days late in submitting the ear-tag numbers of seven animals, all actually present on the farm, and that farmer was penalised £3,000. No appeal process, no humanity about it. The resulting effect was almost another suicide to add to the alarming number which occur in farming every year.

Yours,
WILLIAM BARNARD,

Somerset.

Hove to

Sir,

There is more to add to catalogue of scandal attendant upon Tesco's attempt to foist a gruesome supermarket upon a rare sylvan scene in this once-peaceful nook (Rotten Boroughs, Eye before last). No sooner was permission refused for a smaller scheme because it would conflict with a conservation area, it was given for this one, which trashes an even greater area.

Moreover, as part of that permission Tesco agreed to provide a creche, something upon which it then reneged – bizarrely offering to provide instead some bus timetables for the poor mites to peruse.

It is more than curious that no other, perhaps more generous operator was given the chance to purchase this site. Clearly, if embattled Tesco is to survive, it needs to keep every penny of its recent half-year profits of £513m – up by more than 13 percent. Moreover, this grotesque scheme, which will drain the life from Hove, was pushed through ahead of the current three-month public inquiry into the 10-year local plan. This in fact posits much-needed housing for this site. And at the inquiry, which the inspector had to adjourn while council workers rummaged out the back for vital documents about this site, it emerged that the essential road traffic agreement had not been completed. The inspector had never heard of such a situation. "You have put the cart before the horse," he told the council, and, as such, it would be unwise for Tesco to continue with any work upon the site – and difficult to see how such traffic would be allowed under European legislation.

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER HAWTREE,

Hove, Sussex.

Anagram

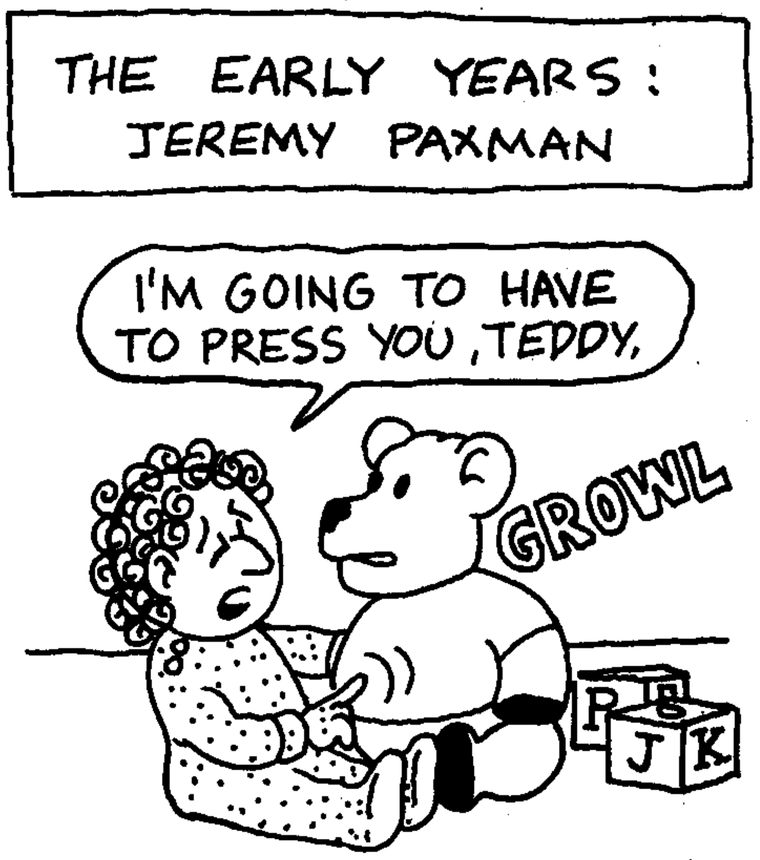
Sir,

Thought you may be interested in a topical anagram I made up:

Mrs Edwina Currie = Admire, Screw, Ruin

Regards,
CLARE MAHON,

Via e-mail.



Cocker hoop

Sir,

In Eye 1063 you featured in Dumb Britain a question from The Weakest Link where the question was "Which Italian city is overlooked by Vesuvius?" and the answer printed was "Bombay".

Having watched The Weakest Link episode in question, the answer said by the contestant was "Pompeii". This answer is wrong but not such a silly answer as Pompeii is in Italy and was destroyed by a volcanic eruption by Vesuvius.

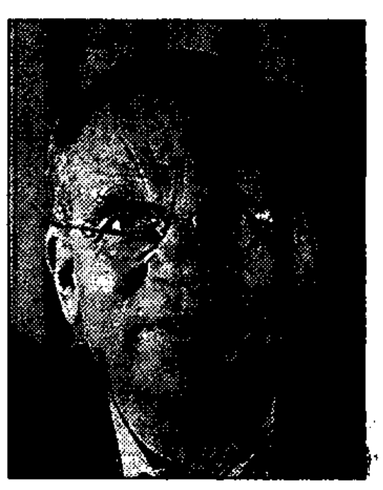
It is an easy mistake to make as the two answers do sound similar.

JOHN UREN,

Via e-mail.

Lookalike

Archer



Lecter

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the frightening resemblance between that infamous inmate, Hannibal "the Cannibal" Lecter, and the equally notorious gourmet currently residing in HMP Lincoln? Is there any chance that they could possibly be related?

Yours,
IAN JONES,

Crewe, Cheshire.

Prime suspect

Sir,

Your cartoonist Mike Barfield obviously spent too much of his youth taking the piss out of his maths teachers, rather than listening to their pearls of wisdom. I assume that he was attempting to give the first few prime numbers in his Apparently strip, but as any fule (or sixth former with a re graded A-level) kno, the first prime number is 2, not 1.

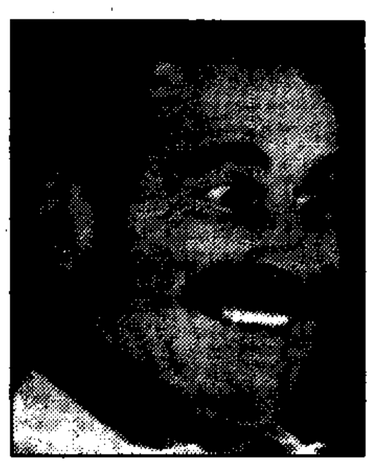
Yours,
NAVIN PATEL,

Via email.

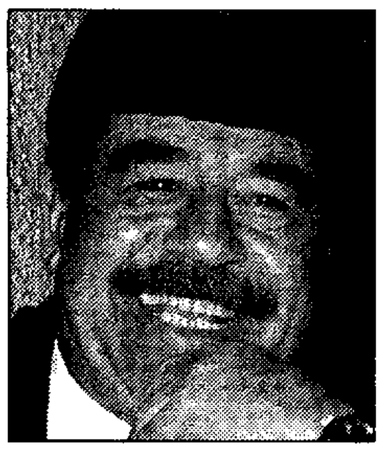
Scenes You Seldom See

"Having heard your side of the story, I realise that I am completely wrong and I'm rescinding the red card"

Lookalike



Hussein



Torrance

Sir,

Saddam Hussein shows his contempt for George Bush and Tony Blair by winning the Ryder Cup!

Yours,
CHARLES BEEVER,

Sheffield.

Cash for questions

Sir,

Your amusing mention of me and my conversation with my friend, Mike O'Brien, omitted one interesting point. In my tireless (or as my Grauniad colleague Mike White would put it, tiresome) inquiries, there is one useful technique in persuading ministers of the crown to answer difficult questions in the lobby.

Instead of waiting to meet them in the grandiose setting of members' lobby, it is far better for a hack to challenge them at the NatWest cash machine in the bowels of parliament. Once a minister has put his card in the machine, he or she is in no position to quit unless they want to lose the filthy lucre from their salaries and other perks. It was precisely at that point that Mike O'Brien conceded a peek at his red box.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID HENCKE,

Westminster Correspondent, The Guardian.

Sympathy for the devil...

Sir,

Martin Kelly's moving plea concerning the previously undocumented plight of down-at-heel corporate lawyers (Letters, 1064) brought a lump to even my normally cynical old throat. Just because we don't see them at the tube station with a dog on a bit of string doesn't mean these top boys aren't hurting. Children being taken out of school too! If they're in a state school it shouldn't make much difference to their chances, but I suspect that's probably not the case.

My damp eyes preclude further correspondence.

Regards,
M.J. MATTHEWS,

Ascot, Berks.

Sir,

Martin Kelly almost had me tearing up my subscription in rage. How dare you overpaid, slothful hacks be so rude to condescend to hardworking corporate lawyers.

Then he lost me: times are tough, it seems, some of these calloused salt-of-the-earth types are having to take their children out of school.

I can only assume comrade Kelly means the poor wee tykes are being sent down t'pit to earn some stale crusts. Surely he can't mean they might have to forgo an expensive education in a public school to join the rest of the unwashed masses that somehow struggle through in the state sector?

Yours ignorantly,
BEN RICHARDSON,

Via email.

Sir,

I have been deeply saddened this morning by the thought of the removal of wee legal bairns from private school in Scotland due to the devastation caused by 11 September.

I am off to start a disaster fund to ensure that the hideous expenses of our Scottish legal brothers can be covered. How much is a round of golf at Gleneagles these days?

In shock but always yours,
CHRISTOPHER GABRIEL,

London.

Fame at last

Sir,

I have bought Private Eye since I was a schoolboy, and at long last I have been represented as a very naughty Winchester architect in last week's Nooks & Corners. This great honour is sadly not entirely of my own making.

Firstly, I would like to thank Piloti for his legion of inaccuracies, a few of which I list below:

The building's steel work is not bright blue but light grey.

The building ***cannot*** *be seen from the West Front.*

English Heritage considered it had no effect on the Cathedral.

The Winchester Trust was not the only body that pronounced in its favour.

The immediately adjacent building is four-storeys high and, in fact, slightly higher. Oddly enough, one of the chief protagonists lives in a four-storey house just 100 yards away.

Yours faithfully,
HUW THOMAS,

Winchester, Hants.

Express delivery

Sir,

RE: World of Spooks.

1. You overlooked to mention the Irish Sunday Independent paid me a very substantial five-figure sum in libel damages for what they published about my interview with Bishop Casey, which was supported by photographs of the bishop and myself. My case was supported by the Institute of Journalists.

The settlement was widely reported at the time.

2. Your account of Michelle Smith, the disgraced Irish Olympic swimmer, wanting Nicole Kidman to play her in a movie was a concoction of Ms Smith's then publicist. It resulted from a meeting with my agent, Ronnie Lief, president of Contemporary Artistes in Los Angeles. The publicist suggested that as both Michelle Smith and I lived in Ireland, I could be "floated" as the screenwriter. When I heard this, I declined. However the Sunday Times ran a garbled story. They later published a correction.

3. In terms of my status as a bestseller. A number of my 40 books have been in the Top Ten in the US and Europe. Gideon's Spies, *my non-fiction account of Mossad (which became a Channel 4 documentary) is published in 23 languages. On the front page is this from Meir Amit, former Director-general of Mossad: "[Thomas] tells it like it was – and like it is". The book identifies a number of intelligence officers. As do my previous books on the CIA. However, like all responsible journalists, I do not name serving field agents – for the simple reason they could be at risk. It is those officers in the CIA, MI5 and MI6 who over the years have provided me with "background" to ensure my information is correct.*

4. Mambo, my original screenplay, was acquired by Dodi al-Fayed. He wanted Princess Diana to act as Executive Producer. Her role attracted names like Brad Pitt, Gene Hackman and Embeth Davitz. The story of the planned star-studded cast was widely published in newspapers all over the world. When Dodi and Diana were killed, film details were widely reported again.

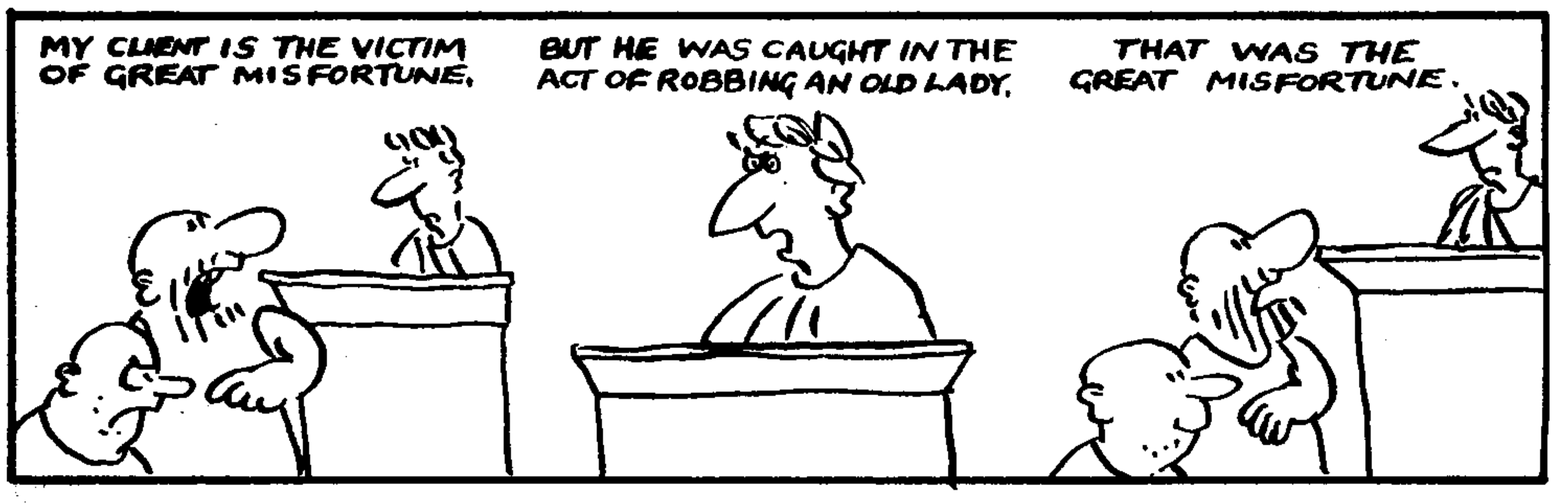
5. Your implication that I am some newcomer to Express newspapers is wrong. I was a staff reporter and foreign correspondent for the Daily Express from 1956-1959. My editor was the legendary Arthur Christansen.

GORDON THOMAS,

Via email.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN


MY CLIENT IS THE VICTIM OF GREAT MISFORTUNE.
BUT HE WAS CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF ROBBING AN OLD LADY.
THAT WAS THE GREAT MISFORTUNE.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"If blood is thicker than water, it must also be thicker than a calendar or a small clock."
ESTHER RANTZEN
(Emily Harrup)

"People are bending over backwards to protect their own backs."
JOHN GREENWAY, LBC
(Bradley Davis)

"We believe that the only way we can lose the game is if we lose it."
TONY CARROLL, Radio Leeds
(Robert McNichol)

"It was just like a plane crash – cars everywhere!"
JAMES COURTNEY (Formula 3 driver)
(N. Sigley)

""More than 30 percent of Americans are obese – and that figure is expanding."
Discovery Channel website
(Richard Ridge)

Letter from **Florida**
from Our Own Correspondent

AFTER all that fuss two years ago, when George W. Bush limped in to the presidency after some well-timed electoral chaos in a state governed by his brother Jeb, allegations are again rife here in Florida of dubious dealings at the ballot box.

In 2000 it was the fate of those hanging, swinging and dimpled chads – holes that might or might not have been punched in voters' cards – that gripped the nation. Now it's a furious controversy about new electronic touch-screen voting machines and what role they played in determining the result of the 8 September race between Janet Reno, former attorney-general and political heavyweight, and Bill McBride, a colourless politician of little standing, for the nomination as the Democratic candidate to run against Jeb Bush next month.

Reno, reckoned by most independent analysts to present a more serious challenge to Governor Bush, went in to the race with a 20-point lead in the polls. But on a turn-out of 1.3m, she was finally forced to accept defeat by 4,800 votes. After the chad fiasco at the last presidential election, most parts of Florida had opted for a return to the drearily reliable ballot paper marked with a cross system. But in the two Reno stronghold counties of Broward and Miami-Dade, where the debacle unfolded two years ago, the authorities chose to experiment with the untested hi-tech option.

Preparations included a $40m programme to install 12,450 touch-screens. But there were problems from the start. In parts of Broward and Miami-Dade polling stations opened five hours late. When they did, many voters reported that the wrong candidate's face lit up when they pressed their screens to register their vote. Others claimed the touch-screen would not let them vote at all. Later on, the touch-screens stopped functioning altogether, overwhelmed, it seems, by the greasy fingers of our burger-loving electorate.

It was only after the announcement of her shock defeat that Ms Reno began to realise how many of her votes might have gone astray in Broward and Miami-Dade. When she threatened to sue, reluctant state officials agreed to look again at voting patterns in the two counties. The investigation succeeded in adding to the confusion and rancour.

In nearly 100 precincts, barely 5 percent of those who had registered were recorded as having voted successfully. In seven precincts, *more* people appeared to have voted than had apparently registered in the first place. In one precinct, 832 people were recorded as having registered on the day of the poll, but no vote was recorded as having been cast at all. In another, 1,039 registered, but only 56 votes were counted.

With discrepancies abounding, Reno's campaign team asked if the 7,250 machines used in Miami-Dade could have their counters checked to see if the results tallied with the number of votes reported as cast. But the machines had already been stacked in a warehouse with no identifying tags visible.

Soon after, and without any explanation, delighted state officials were able to announce that they had somehow managed to check some machines which had had "technical problems" (smudges), and that McBride, a rank outsider against whom the Bush team must fancy their chances, had indeed won, but only by 4,800 votes and not 8,100 as originally declared.

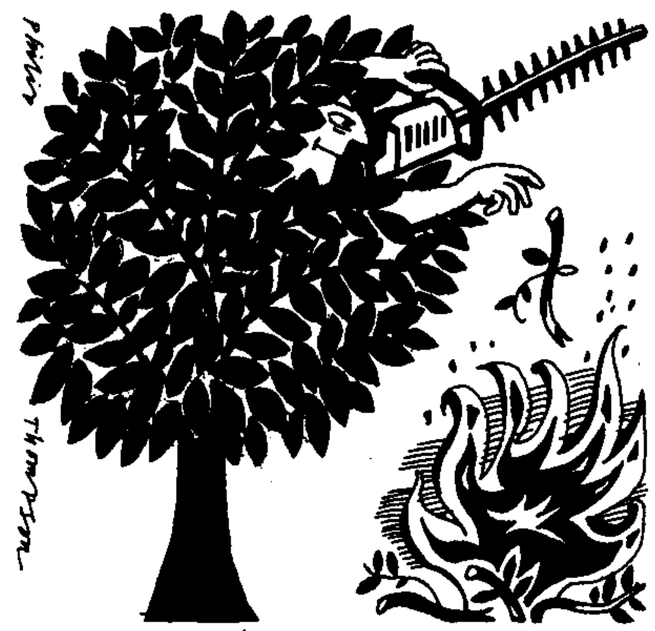
With the gubernatorial election only weeks away, Reno came under pressure from the Democrat hierarchy to let the matter drop so McBride could have a clear run at Jeb Bush. With the secret of what actually happened to Reno's 20-point lead probably sitting in a warehouse, she threw in the towel. But the polls, to no great surprise, already show Jeb Bush likely to defeat McBride, news which led state Democratic chairman Bob Poe to comment: "This has incredible implications on the 2004 [presidential] race."

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"Many of the stupidest accidents we encounter don't make the press," firefighter Reed Davies told a reporter from Fire & Rescue magazine, "but we've had to clear up after some pretty strange self-inflicted disasters over the years. Such as the time a tree surgeon in Montana was sitting up a tree, lopping off branches and throwing them onto a small bonfire on the ground. As you might expect, his aim wasn't always 100% accurate, and when one of the burning branches fell against the trunk, the whole tree burst into flames. By the time we got there, he was dead on the ground, burnt to a crisp, but still wearing his safety harness.

"Another time, we were called to investigate why a light aircraft in Montana



had suddenly dropped off the radar screen. Turned out that the pilot and his passenger were shooting coyotes from the air, when the passenger got excited and blasted his shotgun into the right wing of the aircraft, causing it to go into a spiral and crash. The two hunters were injured, but they survived.

"But the stupidest of all the accidents I've ever been called to was in Indiana, where we found a young man with his hair singed to the scalp, and burns on every part of his exposed skin. While he was recovering in hospital, he gradually admitted to us that he'd been walking past a propane tank one night, and had wondered what would happen if he shot a .22 calibre rifle at it. So he fired. Bang! But nothing happened. So, having survived the first stage of his stupidity, he waited ten minutes for the propane to leak out, then held a burning cigarette lighter in his hand and approached the tank, to discover how close you have to get to a leaking propane tank before it explodes. He soon found out that the answer. It's about fifteen feet." *(Fire & Rescue, October 2002. Spotter: Aidan Turnbull)*

— o —

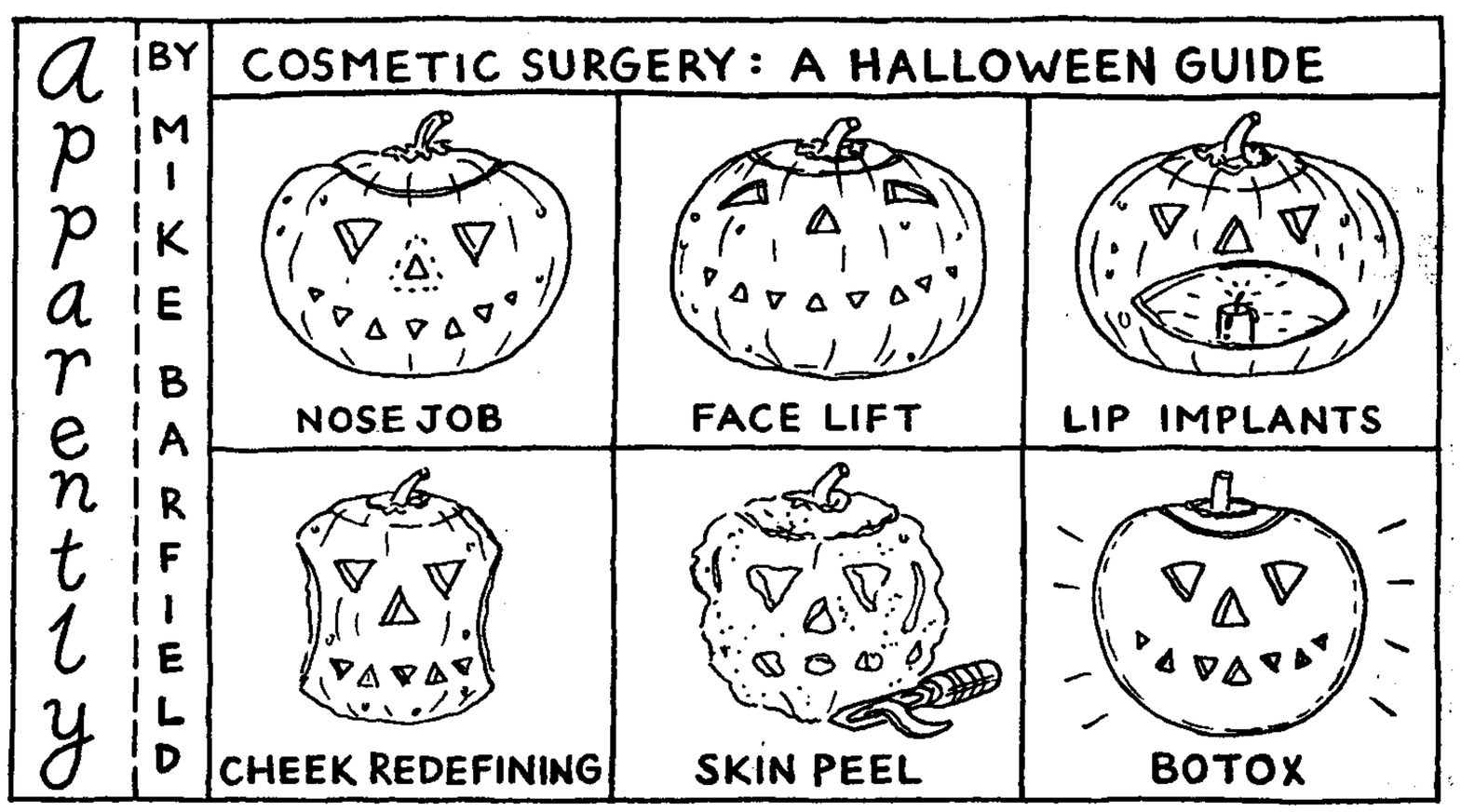
o *"Sacking passengers for vomiting in taxis is not only impractical but unconstitutional," a spokesman for the Canadian Lawyers Association told reporters in Halifax, Nova Scotia. "Firstly, it could prove difficult, if not impossible, to establish who was responsible for the vomit, if there was more than one person in the cab, and we're not going to start carrying out DNA tests on puke. Secondly, an attempt by a driver to impose an on-the-spot fine could easily lead to violence, especially if drink was involved, which it most probably would be. And thirdly, such a fine would violate our country's Charter of Rights of Freedoms, because it would prevent the individual from putting forward a defence in a legal forum."*

Speaking on behalf of taxi drivers, Bob Richards also expressed scepticism about the proposal by the Halifax taxi committee for a bylaw that would allow cabbies to impose a £40 vomiting penalty. "Taxi drivers have enough trouble just collecting the fare late at night, let alone a fine as well." (Halifax Daily News, 10 September 2002. Spotter: Rhonda Palmer)

— o —

o "It was a case of third time unlucky for Dicky Satyagraha, I suppose," police chief Yanti Suvamtilah told reporters in Jakarta. "Nobody knows why, but he had a grudge against a jamu (a maker of herbal medicines) in Cipete Raya, and had vowed in front of witnesses to blow up his office in revenge. And he would have done too, if only he hadn't been so incompetent.

"Two months ago, Mr Satyagraha attempted to ram his car through the office window, but hit a passing car as he approached, sustaining minor injuries. Last month, he tried to blow up the office with gas tanks, but security guards detained him as he entered the premises. This time, it seems that he drove his Toyota Kjang to the office of the jamu under cover of darkness, intending to light a fuse, then run away before the petrol tank exploded. But his car hit a parked Mitsubishi Gallant as he approached, the fuse ignited, and he was blown to pieces before he could get out. The office sustained only minor scorch marks." *(Jakarta Post, 19 June 2002. Spotter: Stuart King)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And do I hear the sound of people eating their words?

I think I do!

All those fainthearts who were predicting that this year's annual parish outing to the seaside was going to be a flop.

"Oh, Vicar," they were saying, "it is going to rain, the coach will be late and you're going to get booed."

Well, how wrong can you be! I don't want to gloat, and I would be the first to admit that there were a few moments when our trip was not 100 percent successful.

For example, our treasurer Mr Brown's speech didn't go down very well. But it's not his fault that he is a poor speaker and lacks charisma.

And of course it was a pity that Mr Prescott as usual made rather a fool of himself by getting all his words muddled up when trying to lead the sing-song in the coach on the way back.

Everyone knows it's "Roll out the barrel", not "scrape" it out, John!

Still, the rest of our time at the seaside was a roaring success and, for me, the highlight was undoubtedly the visit from my very old friend, the Rev. Jefferson Clintstone III from the Church of the Seventh-Day Fornicators in Washington.

The Rev. Clintstone may have retired, but goodness me, doesn't he preach up a storm when it comes to putting over the message – ie, that he is a great supporter of my work and all that I have been trying to do at St Albion's since 1997!

Everyone was spellbound by the Rev. Bill's Southern-style hot-gospelling, and in particular, the ladies were very keen to join Bill for his "laying on of hands" after the sermon!

Special thanks to Rev. Clintstone's film-star friend Mr Kevin Spacey, who came all the way from Hollywood to listen to the debate on our Parish Finance Initiative, the dreaded PFI!

As I told Mr Spacey, it was a real honour and privilege for us to be able to welcome a real star in our midst!

And do you know what Mr Spacey was kind enough to reply? "That's just what Bill and I were saying about you, Vicar!"

These two distinguished visitors were obviously very impressed by everything they saw and heard, particularly my own sermon on the very important theme of "The Need To Be Bold".

They even joined in the special song I wrote for our closing prayer session:

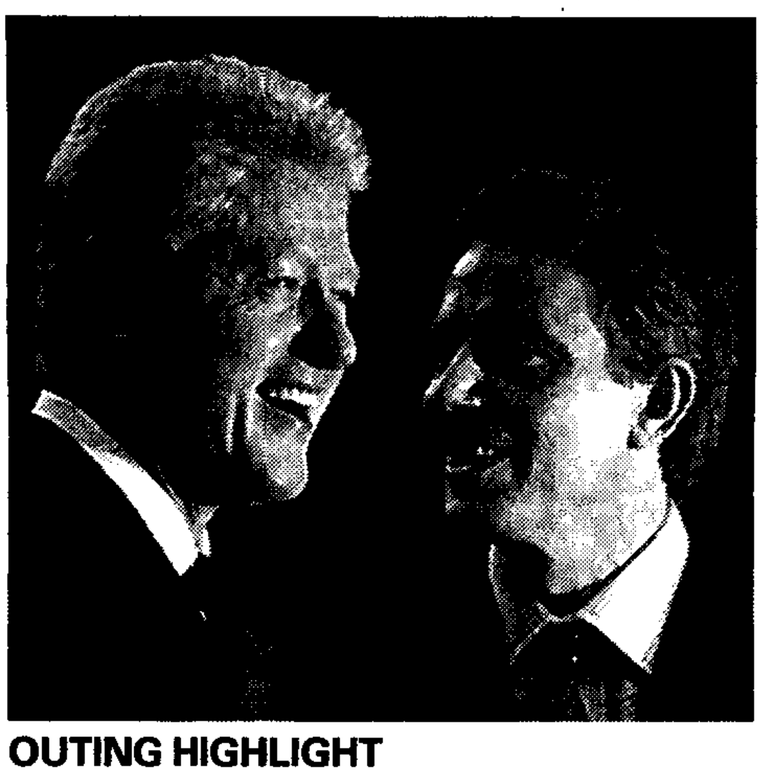
"Don't be timid, don't be afraid,
That's not the way that progress is made.
There's a time for dither and doubt,
So join me now and let's all shout.

Chorus

Be bold, be bold,
Be very, very bold,
Black and white,
Young and old,
Gay and straight,
Hot and cold,
Be bold, be bold, etc."

Words and music T. Blair and P. Mandelson

Yours, Tony



OUTING HIGHLIGHT
Tony tells Bill that he loves him, and Bill agrees, "I love me too"

A Special Message From the Rev. Dubya Bush, Church of the Latter-Day Morons

Brothers and sisters in the Lord! I wish you to know that you and your pastor, Rev. Tiny Bliar, have unwittingly entertained Satan in your midst. I speak of that double-tongued fornicator, that viper in the bosom, the so-called Rev. Clintstone. Woe unto ye, Rev. Bloom, for breaking bread with this Son of Darkness! Have I not warned you before that Satan comes in many guises, sometimes with a moustache, sometimes playing the saxophone. But now the day draweth nigh, when we must smite Lucifer before he smites us. So my message to you all is to watch and pray, lest you join my list of those folks who are in need of a regime change. Iraq, Germanland, St Albion's?

Yours in wroth, Rev. Dubya Bush, the "Pistol-Packing Preacher from Peaceville, USA".

Harvest Time Festival

Thanks to all the parishioners who gave so generously at the service, bringing in their seasonal offerings in a relevant and modern way. We greatly appreciated in particular the following agricultural items:

- *Can of baked beans from new Sainsbury's supermarket*
- *Mobile phone mast*
- *Keys to new executive Barretts home*
- *Annual membership of new golf club*

As it says in the great hymn, "All good gifts around us are sent to help the community in a real sense." T.B.

The Mission To St Gerry's, Belfast

■ Unfortunately, I am having to close down the Mission on a temporary basis. Despite all my efforts to keep the Mission going, some of the regulars have refused to cooperate. I do not want to apportion blame (just in case Mr Adams's friends decide to blow up the community coffee room!), but there have been shortcomings on both sides, particularly one of them. I particularly object to suggestions that my nickname in the Mission is "naive idiot". I do not believe that anyone could be so rude after all I have done for them! However, I obviously do not want to see the Mission closed and Northern Ireland remains my top priority. I will sort it out as soon as I get back from Russia, where my meetings with the Orthodox Metropolitan of Moscow, Father Ras Putin have gone extremely well. As a friend of Rev. Dubya, he made me feel very welcome by arranging a flight home for me at the first opportunity! T.B.

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S 2002 NOBEL PRIZE WINNER

■ **ULRIKA???! Don'tchajushate-her??? What a tramp!!? And that's puttin' it mildly, mister!!? Not content with bedding England's Swedish soccer boss, she now has to tell us all about it!! Urgh!!?! Pass the sickbag, please!!?! Take a tip from Auntie Glenda willya???! Keep your legs and your mouth shut??!?!**

■ ULRIKA – hats and shoes off (geddit?!!!) to the sexy Swede who's not afraid to tell it like it is!!?! Ok, so Sven's already got a gorgeous girlfriend – who cares???! These two Scandinavian scorchers are clearly a match for each other (geddit???!). Let's leave them to it and let them feast from the smorgasbord of love in peace!???! *(This is terrible. Keep it up. Ed.)*

■ *ULRIKA – don'tchahateher???!?* (You've already done this. Keep going.) *Who does she think she is??!?! Edwina Currie????!!! No offence, darling, but I've seen sexier looking women working in Woolies!!!! And, as for posing in a black leather mini-skirt – ka-ka-ka-come off it, Ulrika-ka-ka!!!?!! You're a middle-aged mum, for gawd's sake!!???!! Leave the leather to hot chicks like Cherie Blair??!?!?*

■ **SPARE a thought for Nancy Dell' Olio!!!?!? She's the sizzlin' Italian Signorita whose been two-timed by love rat Sven's away-from-home tactics!!?!? But is she selling her stories to the paper, telling all about her love romps???!???!** *(I hope so. Ed.)* **No, she is maintaining a dignified silence and appearing half-naked outside Number 10!!!! Sven, you must be completely bonkers to leave Kieron Dyer on the bench when we desperately need to shore up the left side of the English defence.** *(Surely "to ditch the delicious Dell'Olio for the Stockholm strumpet"??!?!? Ed.)*

■ ULRIKA JONSSON – don'tcha-loveher? *(That is enough, even for me. Ed.)*

HERE they are, Glenda's Harvest Festival Fellas!!!?!

● **Jeremy Paxman** – I'd like to see *your* "Anatomy" Paxo!?!?! How about giving this gal a hard time???!? (Geddit????!)

● **Prince Edward** – So you're not gay after all – and Ulrika says she gave you a proper job!!!?! (Geddit????!)

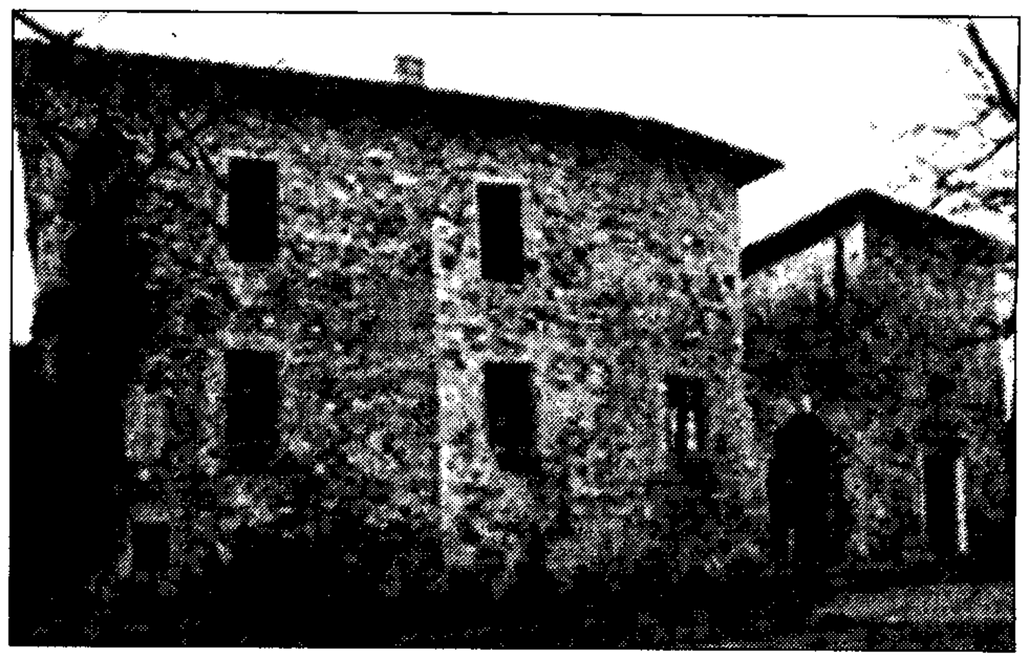
● **John Birt** – Not very crazy name, not very crazy guy!!?!?!

Byeeee!!!

Advertisement

Gnome and Gnome

TUSCANY VILLAS



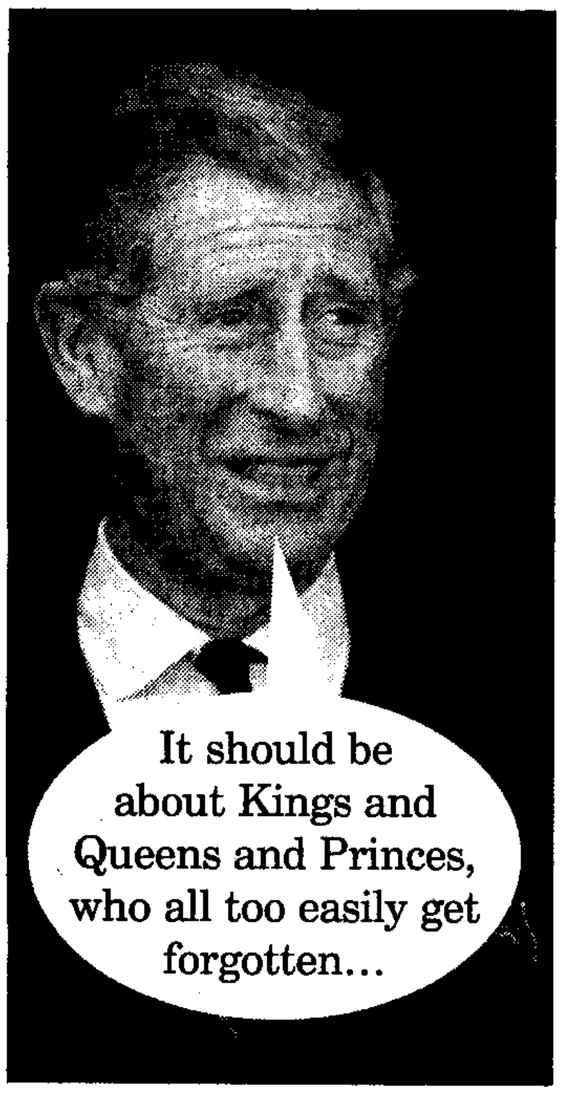
The Villa Pavarotti

THIS stunning 18-bedroom palazzo set in the heart of Chiantishire is very much the sort of thing Prince Charles might buy were he looking for somewhere to live in Italy, which he isn't. We have many similar properties in our brochure which could be yours at a very reasonable price – 300 million euros, which takes into account the increased value of the property now that we know that Prince Charles might be thinking of buying one although that is clearly not the case.

For more details, e-mail us at once at sadpublicityscam@gnomeandgnome.con

There's no place like Gnome!

PRINCE CHARLES HISTORY LESSON



THE DALEK MEMOIRS

by John Birt

■ EXCLUSIVE to Private Eye – Britain's former chief Dalek looks back on his years as Director General of the Dalek Corporation.

Chapter One

My plan was to exterminate the BBC in three stages: Exterminate. Exterminate. Exterminate.

TOMORROW: How I introduced 24-hour rolling Daleks and purchased an Armani Dalek suit and put it on expenses.

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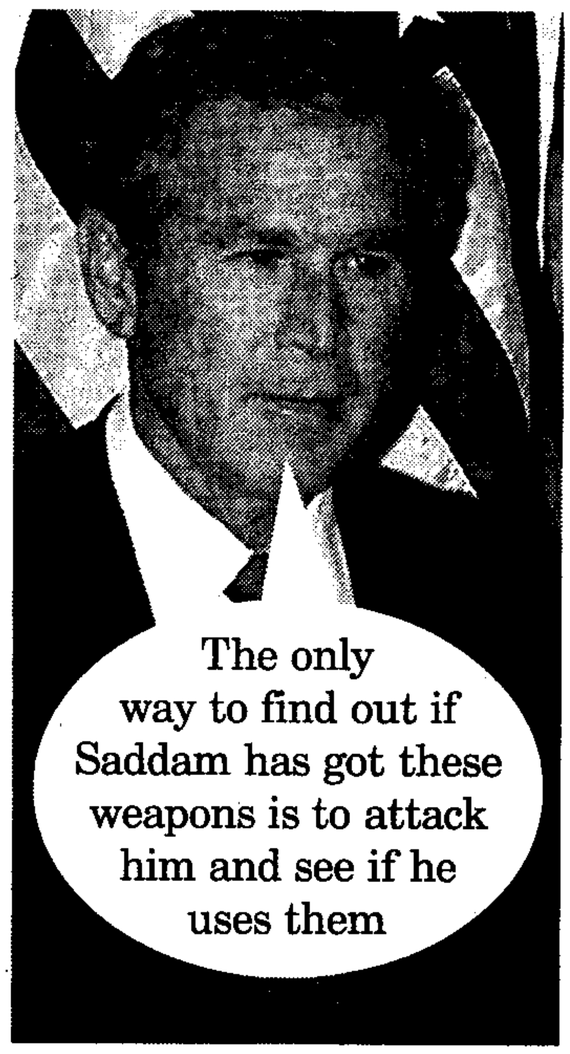
BUSH'S NEW INITIATIVE



Conference Report

'WE ARE NOT THE NAZI PARTY'

Theresa May's Shock Claim

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

DRESSED only in leopard-skin accessories, the Tory chairwoman astonished delegates to the Tory Party Conference (Sir Sidney and Lady Doris Bonkers) by announcing that the Conservative Party was no longer the "Nazi Party" and that it had been a mistake to allow people to think that the party was bent on world-domination and racial purity.

The Single European Mother

"That may have been how things were during the 12-year tyranny of Herr Thatchler, the Iron Führer," said Mother Theresa,

"But all that has now changed. We are caring, compassionate and very keen on single mothers, whatever they are."

TORIES ON COMEBACK TRAIL

by Phil Space

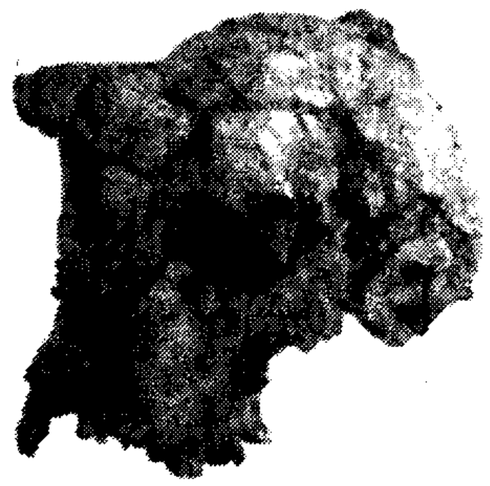
Bournemouth, Wednesday

THE CONSERVATIVE Party Conference stepped up a gear yesterday as delegates cheered a bold speech proclaiming that the Tories are at last being recognised as a political force.

The speech by, er, the bloke, whatsisname, reinforced the new agenda laid out by, er, the woman, you know, with the shoes, who had disagreed with speeches on the conference fringe by that man who I think used to be on the telly who argued that the only Tory anyone had heard of was that bloke, er, thingummy, who was in the Cabinet once or was he...

(Cont. p. 94)

WAS THIS THE WORLD'S FIRST TORY?



by Our Archaeological Staff
Miss I.N.G. Link

THE archaeological world was thrown into turmoil yesterday by the discovery in Bournemouth of the perfectly preserved skull of what some experts believe to be the world's oldest Conservative.

The skull, belonging to a creature dubbed by scientists as *Homophobicus normotebbitus*, has sparked fierce debate as rival experts contest whether it is genuinely human or not.

Chingford Man

Said Professor Oliver Leftwing, "This creature had a very small brain and a limited series of reflexes. It's no wonder he became extinct."

But other archaeologists, led by Professor C.J.P. Kilimanjaro-Barkworth, maintain that the so-called Chingford Man was capable of getting on his bicycle and looking for work.

Norman Tebbit is 7 million years old.

On Other Pages

Your brains tonight **20**

TORY HEELS STUN CONFERENCE (1)

TORY HEELS STUN CONFERENCE (2)

CURRIE ADMITS TO 'NOT HAVING AFFAIR'

by Our Political Correspondent
Dick Out

WESTMINSTER was rocked today after Edwina Currie revealed the identity of a Tory MP she didn't have an affair with.

The MP's wife said she was naturally shocked and disappointed to discover her husband's fidelity but said she would be standing by him.

"I know it was wrong and I know it was a mistake but I couldn't help myself," a chastened Edwina told journalists. "We couldn't help it, we were just two lonely people who never went over to each other's apartments.

"It's difficult to admit that I didn't have sex with him, so anyone can see I had no choice but to talk about it endlessly to anyone who'll listen."

"The war on lone parents is over, and you have the right to buy your shoe"

School news

St Cakes
Pederast Term begins today. There are three suspects in the school. Mr Peter File is the new head of computer studies. Gropings will be on December 3rd. *(That's enough St Cocks. Ed.)*

Weight Watchers will meet at 7pm at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use the large double door at the side entrance.

Hazel Grove Methodist Church newsletter

October is a time for self-help...
Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 PM. Please use the back door.

St Peter's Church, St Leonards-on-Sea

The no longer Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR (aged 40 years in the last week)

Monday

I am here in a place called Boise which is in a place called Idaho which is in America. Oh yes! I am on a very important lecture tour delivering my very important talk on The Nature of Political Leadership. Today I was due to address no fewer than 50 members of the Boise Small Business Persons Luncheon Club. Imagine my not inconsiderable surprise that, when I arrived at the Dan Quayle Memorial Conference Centre, there were several thousand people waiting for me, many of them holding cameras, tape recorders and notebooks to record my every word. I was in no small measure gratified to see that my standing as a world statesman has in no way been tarnished by the events of last week, under which a line has obviously been drawn.

My hostess, Mrs Hackenbush, was very charming, although she mistakenly introduced me as "Britain's top swordsman and number one athlete". Luckily, the audience laughed at her mistake for some considerable time and were obviously on my side.

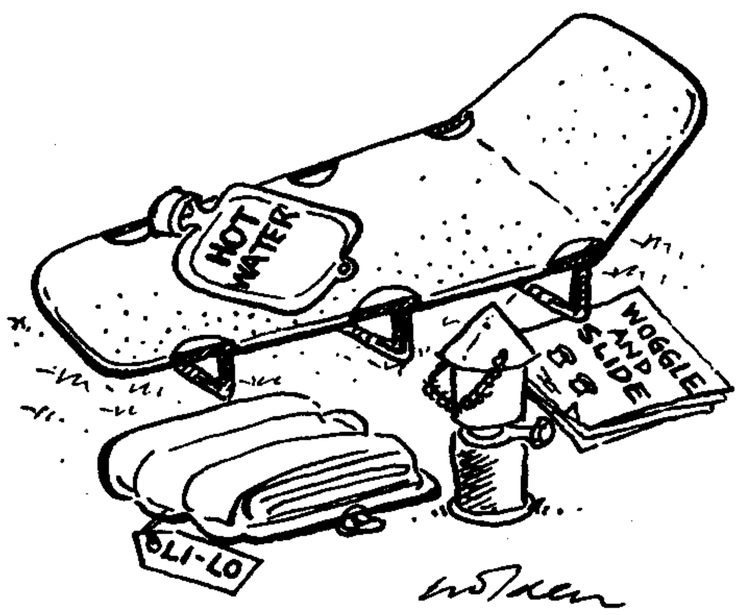
When I spoke without notes for over two hours on the brilliant way in which I had negotiated the Maastricht Treaty, the good people of Boise were very quiet, listening intently with their eyes closed. But when I agreed to answer a few questions, all the men with cameras rushed forward shouting, "Show us your blue underpants, John." I told them that my choice of undergarments had no relevance whatever to the European Exchange Rate mechanism, and that anyway they were grey and not blue, as suggested by that woman whom I am never going to refer to again. NB. This is not a reference to Mrs Thatcher, although it is my policy never to mention her either. The woman I am not going to name is of course the one to whom I have devoted a whole page in my Book of Bastards. How dare she refer to me as "B" when it is quite obviously her who is a total B in every respect.

Tuesday

When I went downstairs to the breakfast area of the Boise Drive-Thru Motel and Holiday Center, I found myself the focus of not inconsiderable attention. The lobby was filled with people wearing t-shirts bearing curious slogans such as "PMs Do It In The Cabinet", "Major Cock-Up" and "I Could Murder A Currie" (which they had spelt wrong). "Why, Mr Major, you sho' are a big celebrity in our li'l town," said the receptionist, Miss Waynetta Gottlieb, "and I'm free after four o'clock." Certainly everyone is very friendly in America, and lots of middle-aged women have been inviting me back to their homes, saying that their husbands are away on business. The only person I was not pleased to hear from was my brother Terry, who interrupted my breakfast with a phone call. "Excuse me, Terence," I said, "I am currently engaged in consuming a 'Boise Waffle Experience', with Blueberry Muffin, Hash Browns and Hominy Grits." "Don't they have any curry over there?" he sniggered in his unamusing and entirely predictable way.

"I hope you have got something rather more important to say than this reference to the woman I do not mention," I told him, "because I am due in half-an-hour to be addressing a convention of water filter and solar power salesmen in the great city of Pig's Knuckle on the subject of the Maastricht Treaty."

"You're wasting your time, John," said Terry. "You should be back home. You're the only person anyone's talking about at the Tory conference. Duncan Smith is finished. They're looking for a new leader, someone with personality, charisma and blue underpants." "You mean me?" I exclaimed, almost choking on a forkful of homemade-style pecan pie "That is the best news I have heard for seven years. At last the party is coming to its senses."



Wednesday

I am now in the Rodeo Inn in downtown Pig's Knuckle, where they have put me in the Clinton Suite, which has a considerably large mirror over the bed in case you want to shave during the night. Americans certainly think of everything!

I have been giving very careful consideration to my brother's suggestion that I should return to lead the Conservative Party to victory at the next election, as I did so often in 1992. Oh yes. Certainly Iain Duncan Smith has proved to be a not inconsiderable failure in everyone's judgement, and it is time to draw a line under him. He always was a bastard in my book (ie, the Book of Bastards, p. 174, "The Bastards Who Voted Against The Maastricht Treaty").

I decided that the moment had come for me to be decisive. I put through a call to my wife Norman to tell her the good news. "Hullo, Norman," I said. "This is your husband, John Major. I have decided to draw a line under the rest of my lecture tour, and to fly back to save the party that I love." "If that is meant to be a reference to your fancy woman, Mrs Currie," she said in a not inconsiderably frosty voice, "you can carry on with your lecture tour for the next hundred years."

"I would like you to make up my bed for when I return," I said, ignoring her uncalled-for reference to the woman who we do not mention. "I have already made it up," she said. "It is in a small tent at the bottom of the garden, along with 300 journalists."

(To be continued)

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD

LOOK, YOU'VE GOT TO UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE PART OF A SQUAD...
SO IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN PICKED THIS TIME IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET YOUR HEAD DOWN AND HOPE THAT YOU'LL BE CHOSEN IN THE FUTURE...
SVEN
OK, I'LL HAVE YOU AT 8:30 AND YOU AT 11:00, AND BRING A FRIEND!
BUT YOU SAID YOU LOVED ME

POETRY CORNER

Lines Written To Mark National Poetry Day

So. Today is
National Poetry
Day.

This is my
Contribution.

E. J. Thribb (17½)

400 New Countries To Join EU by 2007

by Our European Staff **Brussel Twisk**

OVER 400 countries are soon to become members of the European Union, it was announced in Brussels last night.

Amongst the lucky winners of the Eurovision Country Contest are Slovakia, Slovenia, Slavonia, Slobodenia, Moldavia, Wallachia, Neasdonia, Tobleronia, Ulrika, Condoleeza, Nigellia, Silvikreenia, Coronia, Freedonia, Ovaltinia, Malteesia and Iraq.

Signor Romano Freebi, President of the European Commission, hailed this as "a new dawn for Europe, when all the countries of this great continent are finally united by their dream of being subsidised by each other".

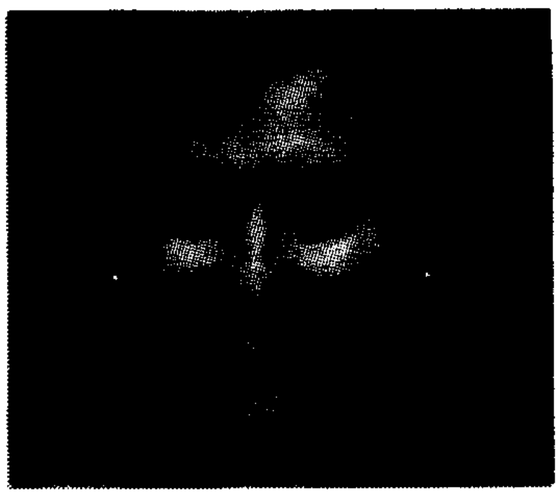
Single European Fudge

But EU Vice-President Neil Kinnochio warned that many of the candidate countries were not yet in a position to satisfy the EU's exacting standards on fraud and corruption.

"They are not nearly corrupt enough," declared Mr Kinnochio.

"Well, so much for the new tilting shell!"

THE WORLD'S WORST COLUMNIST JOINS PRIVATE EYE!



READ TINA BROWN today (because you won't want to next week)

I WAS at a charity brunch at at the Hotel Miramax as the guest of Andy Brankovicz and Wolf Hackenbusch to kick around the latest big post 9/11 investment downturn. Hackenbusch was CEO of Schmooze Meldrew for 11 years (before he was ousted by überhunk Camillo Canaletto in the reverse take-over that was the talk of the Ball of the Century thrown by the Republican hostess Lily Blootz at her Long Island penthouse ranch recently valued by Snobz Magazine at a cool 3 billion dollars, making it the zazziest must-have piece of real estate this side of Oscar Snellenburger's famous Malibu beach house, where Graydon Gravadlax Jr. once memorably strutted his stuff with *(continued p.94)*

'POLITICS IS BORING' Says Grand Prix Ace

by Our Political Correspondent **Murray Walkover**

WORLD champion racing driver Michael Schumacher yesterday lashed out at what he called "The Farce" that British politics has become.

"The same person always wins," he said, "and the other teams are left fighting for third place."

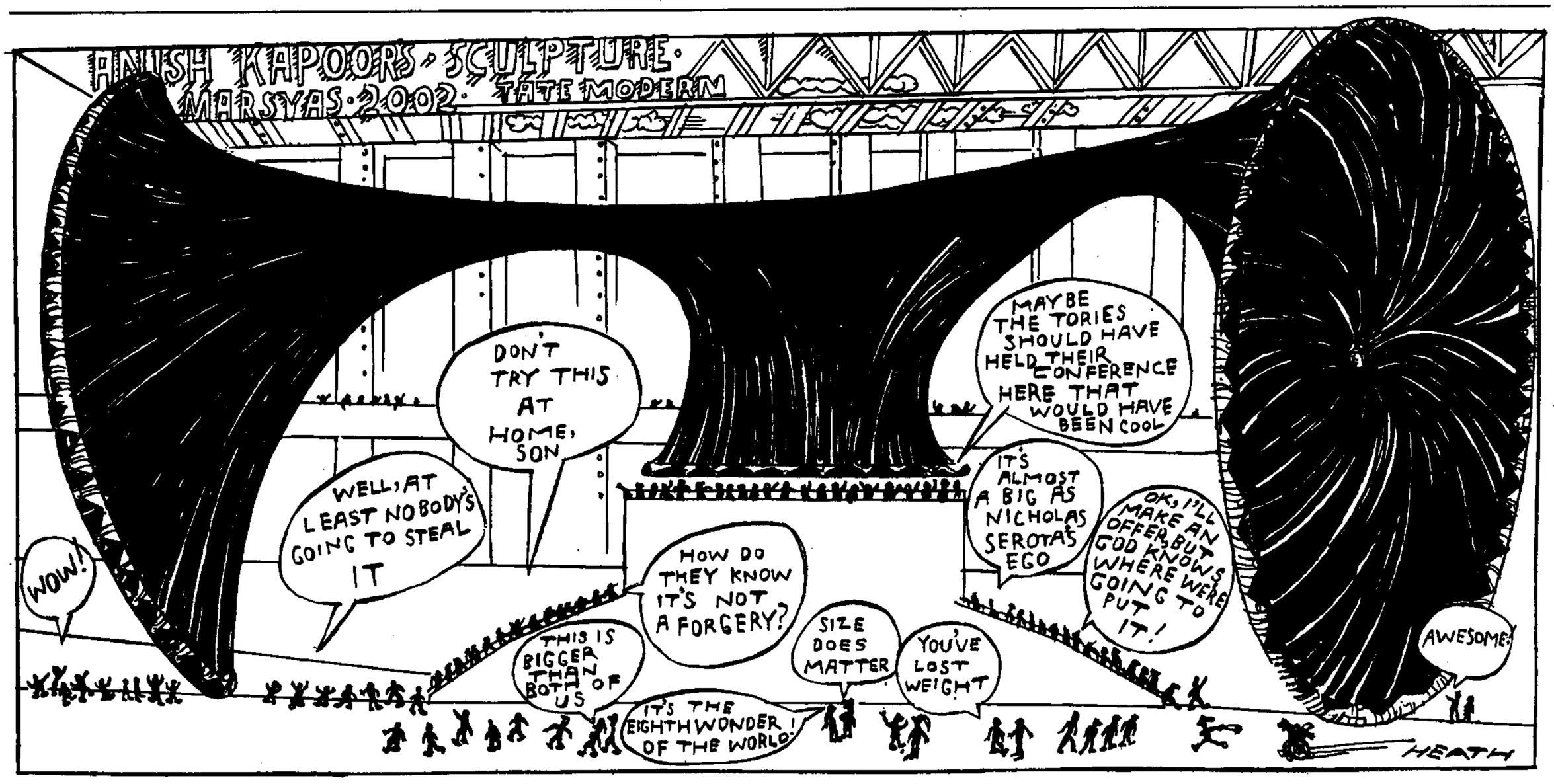
Formula Tone

"As a TV spectacle it is a complete bore," he continued. "No one wants to see Tony Blair and his team win time after time with the others crashing out and blowing up.

"Occasionally Blair pulls over and lets Gordon Brown take the limelight, but it's obviously all part of the team plan and is an insult to the electorate."

Formula One boss Bernie Ecclestone has stepped in with a new plan to make politics more competitive by giving Blair "a handicap".

"I'm going to support Blair and give him £1 million which should in theory hold Blair back and stop him winning all the time."


ANISH KAPOOR'S SCULPTURE
MARSYAS 2002 TATE MODERN
WOW!
WELL, AT LEAST NOBODY'S GOING TO STEAL IT
DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME, SON
HOW DO THEY KNOW IT'S NOT A FORGERY?
THIS IS BIGGER THAN BOTH OF US
IT'S THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD!
SIZE DOES MATTER
YOU'VE LOST WEIGHT
MAYBE THE TORIES SHOULD HAVE HELD THEIR CONFERENCE HERE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN COOL
IT'S ALMOST A BIG AS NICHOLAS SEROTA'S EGO
OK, I'LL MAKE AN OFFER, BUT GOD KNOWS WHERE WE'RE GOING TO PUT IT!
AWESOME!
HEATH

Daily Mail

Following A Great Tradition

TODAY the Daily Mail is proud to publish the prison diaries of one of Britain's greatest novelists.

There is a long and glorious tradition of writers who have produced some of their finest and most profound work in the confinement of the prison cell.

One thinks of Boethius, Cervantes, Bunyan, Dostoievsky, Solzhenitsyn and Oscar Wilde.

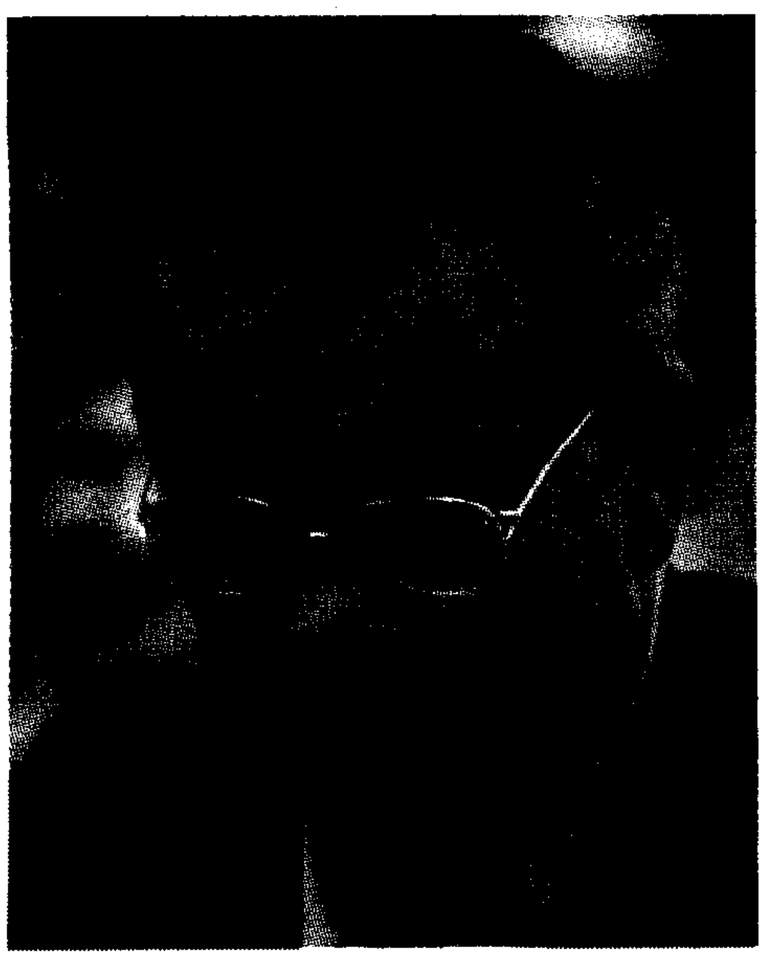
Obviously, one doesn't think of Jeffrey Archer – but we have to think of some historical justification for printing this tedious and self-serving drivel.

What You Couldn't Be Bothered To Read

Jeffrey Archole reveals the living hell that is Britain's prison system.

THE BELMARSH GULAG

Day One



PRISON is a more shocking place than I had ever dreamed of. For a start, it is full of criminals, although most of them are totally innocent, like me.

In prison you are kept locked up in a "cell". This is a tiny room with a locked door and bars over the windows.

The bed you sleep on is very hard, and the food is, quite honestly, disgusting.

The worst thing about being in gaol is that you are not allowed out, even at the weekends. **Does the Home Secretary know this?**

When I get out, I have promised my fellow prisoners that I will make a speech in the House of Lord to get this evil prison system abolished.

The prisoners are guarded night and day by uniformed men whose only job is to watch you all the time, even when you are eating or writing your memoirs. It is an outrage. **Are you listening, Mr Blunkett?**

One of my fellow prisoners (whom I shall call "Made Up") told me his shocking and heart-rending story.

"Jeff," he said. "I have read all your books, and I think you are a genius.

"But, more than that, I believe that you are totally innocent and the judge who sent you down should be strung up. I can kill him for you when I get out, because that's the only language these judges understand."

© *Dacretrash Productions*

■ *TOMORROW: An exclusive interview with Lady Archole, who reveals that her husband is on hunger strike and has only hours to live.*

Important Statement

The Daily Mail wishes to make clear that we have not paid any money to Lord Archole for the above extracts from his prison diaries. Instead we have offered him hard drugs and the services of prostitutes to the value of £200 million.

'WHY I AM NOT LIKE ARCHER'

Mr Toad Hits Out

by Our Riverbank Correspondent Adrian Mole

A FURIOUS Mr Toad last night angrily denied that he was in any way similar to the disgraced Tory peer Jeffrey Archer.

Said Mr Toad, speaking to journalists from Toad Hall, "There is no comparison between the irrepressible, charming myself and the despicable liar Lord Archer."

Mr Toad even produced a list detailing the complete lack of similarity between their two characters.

THAT LIST IN FULL

1. Mr Toad expressed remorse for his crime.

2. Mr Toad did not spend the whole of *Wind in the Willows* attacking the judge for being biased.

3. Mr Toad does not have a wife who goes on television pretending he has been unfairly treated and that he should not have been sent to jail.

4. Mr Toad was not involved in any dodgy share dealings, shoplifting of suits, fiddling of expenses, meeting with prostitutes, issuing bogus writs against newspapers, lying, cheating, etc, etc.

5. Mr Toad is a lovable character whom people like.

6. Mr Toad is an amphibian, whereas Lord Archer is a reptile.

When asked what he thought of Lord Archer's prison diary, a disgusted Mr Toad commented drily, "It's a load of poop poop."

This Week's Top Fleet Street Exclusives

© All newspapers

STUDENT SHARES FLAT WITH FRIENDS SHOCK

SHOCKING news emerged last night, when it was revealed that a student will be sharing a flat with some friends.

A spokesman for the student said, "I can confirm that the rent and deposit will be split between the flatmates, whilst bills and food will remain separate."

RICH POP STAR BECOMES EVEN RICHER

A RICH pop star is set to become even richer.

MAN DOES SOMETHING TO HAIR SHOCK

IT WAS yesterday revealed that a man has done something to his hair.

One onlooker said, "It looked to me as if he'd changed his hairstyle, which would explain his slight change in appearance."

TWO LARGE TELEVISION COMPANIES MAKING RUBBISH TO BECOME ONE VERY LARGE TELEVISION COMPANY MAKING RUBBISH

(That's enough 'News'. Ed.)

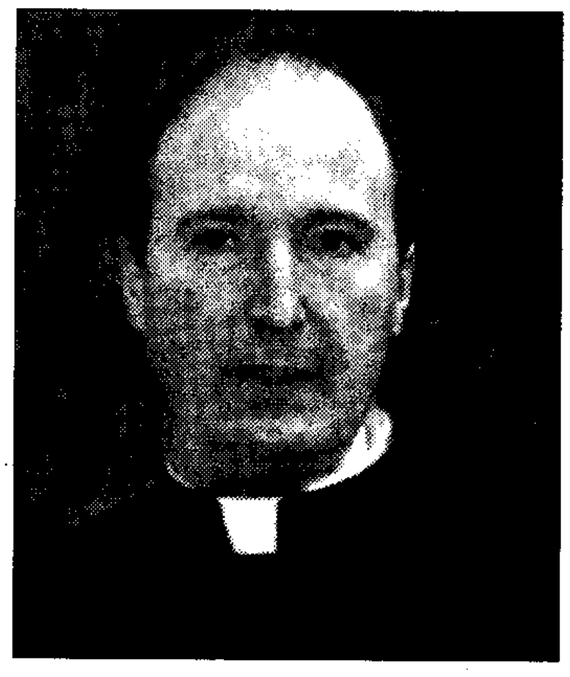
"I'm not sure we've got room for more than two anyway, have we?"

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH Friday, October 18, 2002

Charles Moore Beatification

Controversy Grows

BY OUR RELIGIOUS CORRESPONDENT CHRISTOPHER BEARDIE



The leader of the sinister Opus Dailytelegraph movement has been made a saint in a surprise move that has shocked many Catholics.

"Normally, a saint has to be associated with a miracle," said one of the faithful, "but Moore's so-called miracle of putting on five thousand readers is a sham.

"We all know that he just handed out free newspapers on the Inter-City trains."

Fact

- Opus Dailytelegraph is run by a fanatical group of right-wing Conservatives, many of whom went to school together at Eton.
- Opus Dailytelegraph is devoted to the worship of Liz Hurley, whom its members believe to have miraculous powers to restore the newspaper's circulation.
- The Opus Dailytelegraph has its tentacles right through the British Establishment. Among its devotees are Sir Herbert Gussett, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, Sir Max Hastings and the Venerable Deede, the 109-year-old guru whose longevity is one of the mysteries at the heart of the Opus Dailytelegraph.

"It says: WE ON TRAIN*"*

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

BORIS JOHNSON

Do you like spoons?

Cripes! I wasn't expecting that one! I need a bit of time to think about it. Spoons, eh? Yes, well, I wouldn't say no to a spoon. Jolly good chaps, spoons. Can't have enough of them!

So you wouldn't want any regulations on spoons?

Now, hang on. You're trying to trick me into saying something here, I know. Let's sort this out. No, I'm all in favour of people having as many spoons as they like. So long as they don't start chucking them at each other. I mean, that wouldn't be in anyone's interest, would it? Blimey! You're really putting me in the hot seat, aren't you?

Do you think Iain Duncan-Smith is a spoon person?

Oh no, you won't catch me that easily! I saw that one coming. Lips sealed. No comment. Boris remains shtum. There's your headline, chum.

What do you think about all these Tories having affairs?

Jeepers creepers! What's that got to do with spoons. I thought that's what this interview was all about. You're trying to make me look an idiot, aren't you?

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No.

NEXT WEEK: The Dalai Lama – *"Me and My Llama."*

Earth Summit 'offers no help for east Kent'

East Kent Mercury

8.00 Danger in The Skies (S,T)
See above.

Metro

DIARY

MAX HASTINGS

Women divide into two categories. The kind who does what you tell her to. And the kind that doesn't. Frankly, I've got a hell of a lot of time for them both, in context. But one or two I can't abide.

I once had lunch with Mother Teresa at Wilton's. She was no bigger than the partridge on my plate. In fact, I was half-tempted to pour my remaining gravy over her. I could have downed her in a couple of mouthfuls and still had room for a decent rice pudding.

"God helps those who help themselves," I advised her, "You're frankly barking up the wrong tree grubbing around the backstreets of Calcutta. No one goes there. They're not what I'd call serious players."

Sadly, she chose not to take my advice. Small wonder she died with barely a penny to her name. With her reputation and connections, she could have expected – what? – 250, 300K?

No one likes a little person, be it man or woman. It's a well-known fact that if you're going to be a hard-hitter, you've got to be over 5ft 2ins. And let's not imagine that slogging around in a grubby habit gets you anywhere, either. For all her domestic virtues, Mother Teresa would never have made it to the job of Chief Sub-Editor on a national newspaper.

Lunch is the main job of an editor. Most days, I lunched with high-ranking politicians. I loved those privileged encounters with senior members of the government – men of the calibre of Kenneth Baker.

It was seldom I passed a couple of hours with Ken without at least one indiscretion being yielded. After a particularly heavy meal, I would then be able to gauge which way the wind was blowing.

I well remember Ken telling me one day that Douglas thought Willie had tipped the wink to Nigel that Michael had said that Cecil thought Leon had heard something from Margaret about Norman being a serious player. My editor's instinct told me that this was historic news. The very next day, I contributed the following hard-hitting editorial to The Daily Telegraph:

"Governments divide into two categories. The first kind is strong. The second is weak. Weak governments are frankly pathetic. What we need is a strong government – a government that is afraid neither to take a calculated punt at a high bird, nor to dispatch a stag at 20 paces. And this, on present form, is what we have."

My wife and I were lunching alone with Michael Heseltine and his wife, insert name, in early 1997 at his costly stately mansion in Northamptonshire.

We were being served highly-priced food in his Quinlan Terry sun-lounge off hallmarked silver dishes held by his range of liveried well-spoken butlers. You can tell Michael has class: he always removes the price-tags.

The conversation turned to Jeffrey Archer. "Let's face it, Michael," I said, applying the gold Aspreys tongs to the lobster-filled Angus steaks, "The man's nothing but a name-dropping vulgarian – and Andrew Devonshire agrees with me."

A junior butler held the looking-glass steady as Michael dragged a Cartier comb through his extravagant locks.

"There are two kinds of shit," I continued, sagely "The complete shit – and the prize shit. And Jeffrey is both." Over a very decent Petrus (£350 a bottle wholesale), I gave serious thought to the historic view of shits. "Stalin was a complete shit, Mao a prize shit. John Major's rank of shit we must leave to future historians. But what is beyond doubt is that the man would never listen."

At this point, Mrs Heseltine interrupted with a question. I glanced at my watch. "I can give you two minutes max," I said. While she was boring on about whether anyone would fancy a coffee, I seized the opportunity to pass on a healthy bit of advice. "The world's divided into dogs and grouse," I said, "And it's the dogs that bark, and the grouse that fly. If ever you see a grouse that barks, then, God Almighty, the kindest thing one can do is to wrench its head off. White for me, Mrs H – no sugar, and pretty bloody sharpish."

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

After six years as a big hitter on the national stage, I'd learnt a thing or two about the competition. Over an expensive banquet at the Palace, I got the cut of the Queen Mother's gib pretty damned quick, for instance.

She was sitting next to me, short and buxom with far too much make-up. Not my type, but there we go. "So what d'you reckon the silver on this table is worth, ma'am?" I said, putting her at her ease, "500K? 600K? Bloody hell! That's nearly two years' salary!"

Let's not beat about the bush: The Queen Mother was a woman. Nothing wrong with that, of course. It remains my undiminished belief that the female of the species is more reliable, professional and idealistic than men, particularly when it comes to cooking and needlework. But something told me that it affected her judgement.

"Have you come far?" she asked me.

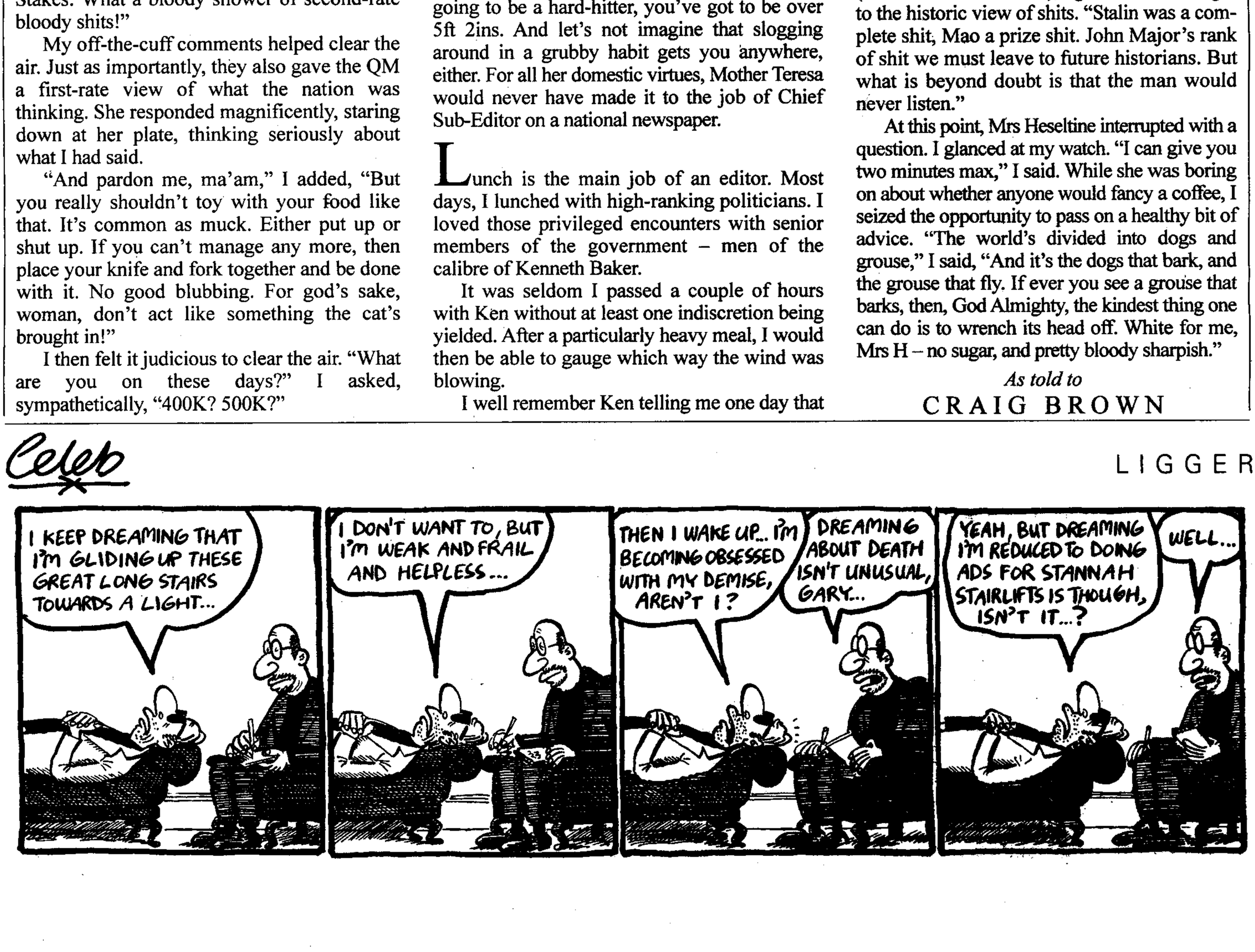
"Bloody daft question!" I replied with an engaging chuckle. With a deft stab borne of many years in waders, I speared my smoked trout starter and shoved it with a single thrust into my mouth, "Frankly, ma'am, I don't know why we pay you such a vast amount if you can't come up with something better to say than that!"

My jovial remark broke the ice superbly. From that point on, the old lady wisely shut her trap while I gave her the benefit of my experience. "With the greatest possible respect, ma'am," I began, in deference to her historic position, "Your whole family would win first prize in the World-Class Nouveau Whingeing Stakes. What a bloody shower of second-rate bloody shits!"

My off-the-cuff comments helped clear the air. Just as importantly, they also gave the QM a first-rate view of what the nation was thinking. She responded magnificently, staring down at her plate, thinking seriously about what I had said.

"And pardon me, ma'am," I added, "But you really shouldn't toy with your food like that. It's common as muck. Either put up or shut up. If you can't manage any more, then place your knife and fork together and be done with it. No good blubbing. For god's sake, woman, don't act like something the cat's brought in!"

I then felt it judicious to clear the air. "What are you on these days?" I asked, sympathetically, "400K? 500K?"


I KEEP DREAMING THAT I'M GLIDING UP THESE GREAT LONG STAIRS TOWARDS A LIGHT...
I DON'T WANT TO, BUT I'M WEAK AND FRAIL AND HELPLESS...
THEN I WAKE UP... I'M BECOMING OBSESSED WITH MY DEMISE, AREN'T I?
DREAMING ABOUT DEATH ISN'T UNUSUAL, GARY...
YEAH, BUT DREAMING I'M REDUCED TO DOING ADS FOR STANNAH STAIRLIFTS IS THOUGH, ISN'T IT...?
WELL...

Literary Review

No rhyme, little reason

Public Property
Andrew Motion
(Faber, £12.99)

Feminine Gospels
Carol Ann Duffy
(Picador, £12.99)

WHATEVER one might have thought of his hot-blooded verse, Ted Hughes was always going to be a hard act to follow as poet laureate. At any rate the confusions of motive and definition that attended the search for his successor in 1999 were quite wonderful to behold.

An establishment candidate – youngish Mr Motion here – was immediately pitted against an alternative establishment candidate, the larksome Ms Duffy. A few wacky outsiders (Dr Mo Mowlam thought it would be a jolly sound plan to ask Sir Paul McCartney) came and went, the nation's tiny handful of genuinely distinguished poets (Enright, Hill, Jenkins) was studiously ignored, and to nobody's great surprise Motion scooped the pot. By a queer coincidence both he and Carol Ann Duffy are publishing their first post-Laureate collections in the same month, giving us a splendid opportunity to examine not only what we ended up with but what we missed out on as well.

No surprise, of course, to discover that champ and challenger turn out to deal in more or less the same produce. Motion's palsied Romanticism, Duffy's mildly feminist high-jinks – I mean, it's all *poetry* isn't it, safely tailored to what the contemporary audience expects from poems and the people who write them, and as predictable in its way as Tom Paulin's higher brow variations on Verlaine. All cosily institutionalised, too. Motion is currently professor of creative writing at the University of East Anglia and has his stuff commissioned by Radio Three, the TUC and the V&A. Duffy, on the other hand, is professor of contemporary poetry at Manchester Metropolitan University, and has *her* stuff commissioned by Waterstone's and Wolverhampton city council. Patronage in the arts never goes away, you see, it just takes different shapes.

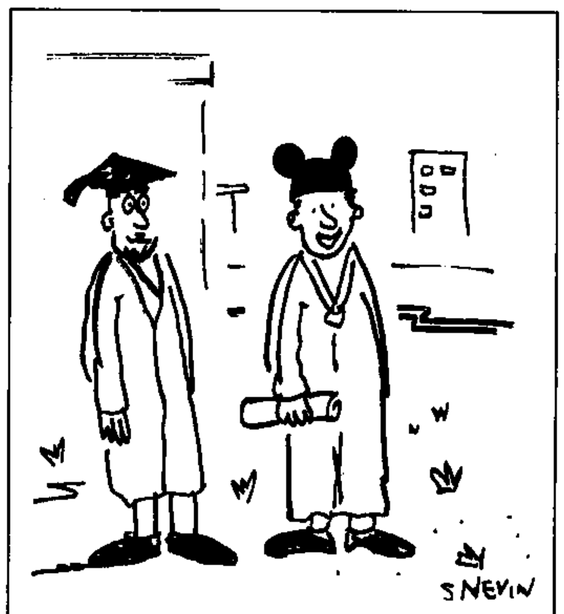
As for the stuff itself, hardly any of it, strictly speaking, can be classified as poetry. Here, for example, is the opening stanza of a limpid little Motion number entitled "Territorial":

The war ended. My father's war
went on
in a Territorial twilight: one-off
dances
(which meant scarlet jackets and
drainpipes)
and dull drill at week-ends – close
by in Colchester. . .

Now, don't think me obtuse, but other than that it appears under the signature of the poet laureate, why is this a poem? Close examination reveals a couple of minor alliterative flourishes, but essentially what we have here, however fancifully arranged on the page, is simply prose chopped up into irregular lines. Though much more adept at sprung rhythms and internal trickery Duffy, too, to a certain extent, has that fatal habit of merely chucking words on the page and calling it verse.

Then there is that mutual hankering (explicit in Motion, implicit in Ms D) to address the monster issues boiling away out there on TV screen and news page. Of Motion's commemorations of the death of Princess Diana and the Queen Mother's hundredth it would be uncharitable to point out much more than the fact that poets laureate have been embarrassing themselves in these exercises ever since Sir Alfred Austin fashioned his immortal couplets on the Jameson Raid (*"They rode across the veldt/as fast as they could pelt"* etc). Of the two Carol Ann Duffy's girl-power takes on past time (see for example "Sub" which starts with her infiltrating the pitch at the 1966 World Cup Final) are marginally more effective, apart from the usual tendency to overdo things: "The Laughter of Stafford Girls' High", which might have made a good Betjemanesque couple of pages, goes on for 10 times that length.

At least Ms D likes doing her things in different voices. Such are Motion's identikit techniques that it takes only half-a-dozen poems to establish how they work – "Stargazing", for instance, which limps vaguely towards a final couplet about a meteor (and presumably the sexual congress going on beneath it) *"seeming in its dying dive/to leave the heavens more alive"*. That English Romanticism, despite death, destruction and the 20th-century diaspora, *still* it wanders on! Curiously, nearly 70 percent of respondents to an opinion poll commissioned for last week's National Poetry Day maintained that poetry cheered them up. Clearly they can't have come across either of these darling volumes. As for the public property to which Motion refers, on this evidence the return to those private places where half-decent poetry has always flourished can't come soon enough.



"I've got a Mickey Mouse degree"

Booksellers' Block

"3 for 2 or 30% off sticker?"

O'Brien won't now give it back to his mentor, enabling both friends to pocket ten grand each?"

Prize organiser William Sieghart dismissed the *Eye*'s piece as nonsense. Picador itself said the allegations were "entirely false". Michael Donaghy, yet another Picador poet, resigned as chairman of the judges immediately after the article appeared, but nevertheless maintained that it was "ludicrous".

Lo and behold, last week Sean O'Brien and his fellow-judges announced the winner of the Forward Prize. And, just as we predicted, the £10,000 cheque went to. . . Peter Porter!

■ *IS Edwina Currie's* Diaries 1987-1992 *the great success story its publisher Time Warner is trumpeting it to be?*

Last Friday it was languishing at number 3,530 in the Amazon.co.uk sales chart, at a time when even a dull business manual called Exploring Corporate Strategy: Text and Cases *managed to scrape into the top 10.*

This lacklustre response contrasts with HMV Media CEO Alan Giles' recent suggestion that scandal and violence were good for business. He told the FT's Observer column that Edwina Currie had done a Roy Keane "and headbutted John Major". Perhaps when the shops begin to return the vast numbers of books (Trafalgar Square had 250, of which it sold 5 on the first day), he might modify his view.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"PLEASE Note: *The Two Towers* is the title of the JRR Tolkien book originally published in 1954, the second book of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

"The title was thus established some 47 years prior to the attacks on the World Trade Center towers, and there is no evidence to suggest that [film director] Peter Jackson meant anything by continuing the same title other than faithfulness to the beloved Tolkien classics.

"Furthermore, the two distant, opposing towers in the Tolkien classic have very little if anything in common with the two matching towers of the World Trade Center."

The above was a note from the editors of PetitionOnline.com, following submission of another petition denouncing the "offensive and morally repugnant" decision by Peter Jackson to call his Tolkien sequel *The Two Towers*, a title "clearly meant to refer to the attacks on the World Trade Center".

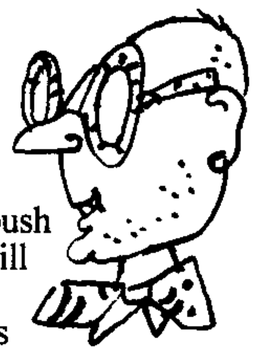
'Bookworm'

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ **BACK in July the *Eye* drew attention to the remarkable number of Picador poets who are judges or recipients – or both – of the Forward Prize, Britain's biggest poetry award.**

"Last year [Peter] Porter gave the main prize to Sean O'Brien," we noted. "What's the betting

AD NAUSEAM



JUST when you thought the loyalty card had gone the way of the space hopper, here comes Nectar, the mother of all reward schemes.

Thanks to a £50m marketing push through agency WCRS, readers will by now be aware that Nectar is an umbrella card that allows shoppers to accumulate points at more than one shop. Big names such as Sainsbury's, BP, Debenhams and Barclaycard are all on board in what amounts to an ingenious means for large companies to pool their customer databases. Anyone who signs up can expect junkmail to start spewing through the letterbox from the most unlikely sources.

Unfortunately, on the day of its launch the online application process became overloaded and has been down ever since. It remains impossible to get a card without an application form collected instore. From a marketing point of view, this rather defeats the object: the card was supposed to get you in the store, rather than vice versa.

Even more embarrassing is that it was too late to pull the ad campaigns urging shoppers to "Get points faster with Nectar". Right now, we can't even get Nectar. The endline read: "Rewards are sweeter with Nectar", which again is worthy of a chuckle, as the reason the site had to be shut down was because applicants were able to view other customers' personal details – a reward the more unscrupulous probably weren't expecting.

It illustrates that oldest of adland axioms: get the product right first, then try to sell it. Perhaps the £50m should have been spent on establishing a secure website.

FOLLOWING the explosive revelations in *Eye* 1063 that neither expert analysts nor industry mavens have the faintest idea whether or not advertising is booming or busting, two pieces on the *Guardian* website last week made interesting reading.

On 8 October a headline read "Bullish adspend report counters Sorrell's pessimism", going on to say that "Advertising expenditure in the UK could rocket by as much as 45% over the next decade, according to authoritative new research that flies in the face of gloomy predictions from the likes of advertising boss Sir Martin Sorrell."

On 9 October, however, there was a change of heart. "Analysts dampen hopes of ad recovery" was the headline, with a report from an investment bank WestLB suggesting that "Sir Martin Sorrell was right all along".

Warballs

"In the year in which the world was overcome by the tragic events of 11 September and the resulting war in Afghanistan, and George Harrison lost his battle with cancer, a brighter note was struck by Hear'Say, who sold 549,823 copies of 'Pure and Simple' in its first week, a record for a debut act."

— New edition of the *Guinness Book of British Hit Singles*.

"Fragrance-industry insiders are hoping for better sales this year. 'Last autumn, post 9/11, we felt guilty,' says Anne Robinson, president and CEO of Caswell-Massey, America's oldest chemist and perfumers… 'But now, we are starting to recover. Putting on fragrance is just the beginning, but it is something we are allowing ourselves to do.'"

— *Marie Claire* magazine.

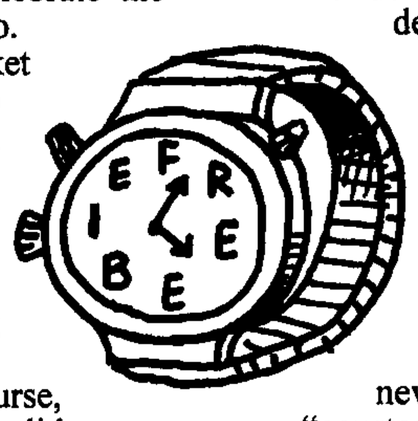
A new leap in mobile phone technology

"Did you get the picture of me on the train?"

WATCH WATCH

CELEBRITY beckons for Dylan Jones, editor of *GQ*, latterday Beau Brummell and the *Independent's* chosen arbiter of modern manhood.

His first piece for the *Independent's* froth-free new Review section was a Top Ten Very Expensive Watches special, featuring a dazzling array of quality chronographs including a £6,250 Tag Heuer Monaco. Two months later he was being whisked off to Monaco by Tag Heuer, to celebrate the launch of its £6,250 Tag Heuer Monaco.



Jones then used the story of his junket ("To Monaco, then, with Jerry Hall…") for his weekly *Independent* column, mentioning that "Understandably, Jerry is a big fan of Tag Heuer". Understandably, so is Dylan after "sipping very cold, very good champagne in a small fast jet" at Tag Heuer's expense.

One favour deserves another, of course, and no more than a month after his holiday *Evening Standard* readers were advised "If you want a sturdy summer watch, then you can't go wrong with a Tag Heuer." And if you want a beano in Monaco, you can't go wrong with a Tag Heuer either.

Telling *Standard* readers about David Beckham and a £30,000 GQ photo shoot, Jones noted that "Beckham currently has a penchant for Steve McQueen". A week later, retelling the "story" of the same shoot in the *Indy*, we learn what watch McQueen famously wore – it's that darned £6,250 Tag Heuer Monaco again! Very cold champagne all round.

Last week's column told of a trip on Concorde "on what can broadly be described as business." It would appear Jones is quite often involved in what can broadly be described as business: in June he described how his style editor at GQ was "buried underneath a pile of free watches, deliberating whether or not to send one back as a token of professional objectivity".

Such unscrupulous behaviour might interest *Independent* readers who thought the aforementioned Top Ten Luxury Watches Special was written with special professional objectivity two months before.

In May he also revealed how his new favourite sunglasses had arrived "courtesy of Diesel". And Diesel will be pleased to learn that its special delivery did the trick, as at the bottom of the same paragraph Dylan revealed: "This summer I'll mostly be wearing pink Diesel sunglasses, and if you've got £85 to spare, I suggest you do the same." When one recalls that in another, earlier column Jones had thanked "the PRs who've written", everything suddenly made sense.

Pseuds Corner

My best friend is myself. I'm the last person I want to see at night and the first in the morning. I am endlessly fascinating – at eight o'clock at night, at midnight, I'm fascinated. It's a lifelong relationship and divorce will never come into it. That's why, as I say, I feel privileged. And that is an honest reply.

MORRISSEY
Observer Magazine

The deeply in-grained business stereotypes of the county of Essex – including the wide boys and the white van man – are finally being put to rest. People are beginning to associate Essex with being the birthplace of towering intellectuals such as the Poet Laureate Andrew Motion and home of author Germaine Greer.

From a press release despatched by Access Accounting Ltd

The design enhances fascination, invisibility takes on a new meaning in a brief that goes beyond the concept of a second skin and seems literally to be painted on your body. Extreme is an alluring voyage of discovery at the confines of sensuality.

Label found on pair of 'Extreme' briefs

I'm particularly vulnerable to shoes and panties. Lately, I've been obsessed with a rhinestone bikini. I also like different kinds of shoes – I'm really greedy about them. I regard shoes as the cars of women's feet.

PATRICIA ARQUETTE
In-Style

With the continued growth of hand-held foods, the commercialisation of Kerry's FlavorCoreTM patented sauce filling cold forming extrusion technology has attracted industry wide interest for appetiser, hand-held and centre-of-plate applications.

From the annual report of Irish food company the Kerry Group

Pseuds Corporate

The Senior Business Analyst will have primary responsibility to elicit, analyse, validate, specify, verify and manage the real needs of the project stakeholders, including customers and end users. He/she will take the role of functional area manager, where he/she is the primary conduit between the customer community (the functional areas) and the software development and implementation team through which requirements flow.

Salford University ad for 'Business Analyst' in Information Services Division

ABN AMRO will enter the consumer market with its Van Gogh Preferred Banking Services, targeted at upper middle-class consumers.

ABN AMRO press release announcing the approval of its Chinese consumer banking licence

CONTRIBUTORS: Emily Harrup, Neil Hodge, Estelle Cook, Ben Bardsley, Anon, Robin Pascoe.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

SCANDAL, WATT SCANDAL

DOUGAL WATT describes himself as a "dull grey bean-counter" in the web of the European Union's bureaucracy. But at the moment he's in hiding somewhere in Scotland (he won't say where), and believes his life is in danger.

Dougal Watt

Mr Watt's record seems ordinary enough. He qualified as an accountant while working for the national audit office (NAO) in 1995 and was headhunted by the European court of auditors, where he became an official in 1997. The court has 15 members and its job is to check and audit the accounts for the European commission. Unlike Britain's NAO, the court is sovereign and responsible to no one – least of all the European parliament.

In April Mr Watt wrote to the ombudsman of the European parliament setting out allegations of nepotism, sexual harassment and bad management in the court. He sent copies to members of the European parliament and was rather surprised when they were not promptly delivered. He circulated his allegations among the staff of the court.

In an attempt to seek his colleagues' support for his whistleblowing, he stood in the elections for his staff committee. He asked colleagues to vote for him if they endorsed his claims as "representative and reliable". He got the second highest vote out of 12 candidates. The vote was a clear sign of support for what he had done.

The authorities, however, responded differently. They put it around that Mr Watt was insane. Upset and infuriated, Mr Watt compiled two much more substantial letters.

The first, on 17 June, addressed to Michael Herve, secretary general of the court of auditors, set out his suspicions about the mysterious death of Dr Antonio Quatraro in 1993. Quatraro, who had been suspended as head of the division of the commission responsible for the management of the tobacco market, plunged to his death from a tall office block in Brussels. His death provoked much publicity but an official investigation decided it was a plain case of suicide. Mr Watt disagrees.

He himself had worked on a tobacco audit in 1999-2001, and in the course of his investigations, he says, "wide and deep penetration of Commission services by multinational cigarette companies" had been identified. The corruption arising from this penetration, Mr Watt alleged over his 38-page letter, led to the suspension of Dr Quatraro and to his death either by enforced suicide or, more probably, murder.

The manner of his death, wrote Watt, "mirrors" that of the death on 17th June 1982 of Graziella Carroucher, secretary of Roberto Calvi, president of Italy's Banco Ambrosiano. She plunged to her death in mysterious circumstances from a fourth-floor window in the bank. The following day Calvi himself was found hanging from scaffolding under Blackfriars bridge in circumstances that pointed to a ritual killing organised by the influential and murderous P2 branch of the Italian freemasons, one of whose founding branches was the "Fratelli Neri" (black friars). Calvi's death was written off as suicide by the City of London police, but the case has just been reopened for the third time. Mr Watt's letter set out these suspicions – including some first-hand evidence of masonic connections in the European bureaucracy – in meticulous detail.

The following day (18 June) he wrote again to all members of the European parliament protesting that he was not insane, but frightened. For the first time he named the members and officials of the court of auditors who had hired friends or members of their family in responsible positions, and/or had sexually propositioned secretaries. He claimed that when the secretaries complained, they were not hired again, even though in one case the harasser admitted the charges.

Since sending these letters, Mr Watt has wandered disconsolately round Scotland, refusing to return to his job in Europe until his allegations are properly investigated and dealt with. He tells the *Eye* that he expects any day to be sacked or compulsorily retired. As he freely admits, many of his allegations about the Quatraro case are based on circumstantial evidence and suppositions.

If his was the only complaint from an EU accountant, it could perhaps be passed off as a delusion. And only one British newspaper – the *Herald* in Scotland – has so far taken Watt seriously. But it is not the only complaint. More publicity has been afforded to the case of Marta Andreasen, formerly chief accountant to the commission. She was suspended and removed from her position by the commission after blowing the whistle on her bosses' failure to act on her warnings that the accounting system for the whole hundred-billion euro European budget was wide open to fraud.

Marta Andreasen

Her allegations have been furiously resisted by the commissioner responsible, the former British Labour leader Neil Kinnock. But every time Mr Kinnock tries to refute Ms Andreasen in public, he makes a fool of himself. One complaint of possible corruption, conspiracy (and worse), from one EU accountant could be an accident. Two at the same time can hardly be a coincidence.

BELLAMY'S BETTERCARE BOMBSHELL

THE privatisation of health care continues – usually without anyone realising it until it's too late.

For example, what seemed like an obscure and complicated case in Northern Ireland has opened up a huge section of public health care to the "laws of the market". It will lead inevitably to widespread misery, especially among old people.

Bettercare, a Northern Irish private health company, was irritated at what it regarded as "unfair competition" from local councils and the health service. Publicly-owned old people's homes, it complained, were being "subsidised" by the health service, and this made it very difficult for private homes to flourish.

The company complained to the Office of Fair Trading (OFT), which rejected the complaint on the established ground that this part of public service was not covered by competition law. Bettercare, assisted no doubt by the private health care lobby, appealed against the OFT decision. In a long and complicated case, which was hardly publicised, the company's lawyers argued that councils and the health service should be subject to the same competition laws as any private company.

The OFT argued in reply that the health service bodies were financed from the public purse and were operating their homes solely in the interests of the elderly and disadvantaged. In essence, the argument was that the point of competition laws was to establish a level playing field for private firms, but that public firms, especially the health service, should be free from such laws because of the way they got their money and the purpose for which they used it.

The case was decided in Belfast by a three-man competition commission appeal tribunal under Sir Christopher Bellamy, a judge at the court of first instance of the European communities. The tribunal decided in favour of the private company and against the OFT. As a result, the OFT is now obliged to consider the complaints of the company and others. A time-honoured legal protection for the health service and local authorities against the "laws of the market" was thus removed.

At the beginning of last month the OFT announced that there would be no appeal against the judgment. "The OFT agrees with the view," drooled a press release, "that, with more public services being provided by the market, the disciplines of the market place, including competition law, should apply."

There was much rejoicing by the Independent Healthcare Association representing private health care companies. But there was another side to the story. The *Daily Telegraph* of 16 September revealed that as a result of the Bettercare decision: "Local authorities may have to pay private-sector nursing homes an extra £50 to £85 per head per week for people in care, and that could come to £1bn more a year."

Local authorities won't be able to pay increased fees and the result will be very much more of what is happening already: subsidised homes for the sick and elderly closing down and being replaced, if at all, by homes charging much higher rates than most of the people who need them can afford.

MMR

LAST week it was reported that a 13-year-old boy who became severely epileptic after his MMR jab has been found to have measles virus "consistent with the vaccine strain" lodged at the site of his brain damage. He is not the only one.

Another boy, it emerges, died two years ago aged 15 after worsening epilepsy and a deterioration in his health. A recent brain biopsy has also shown the presence of such measles virus in his brain.

His family, which wants to remain anonymous, is one of only a handful to have won a payment from the government's vaccine damage unit over the MMR jab. The boy was a healthy, bright four and a half year old and about to start school when he received his triple jab. Within hours he suffered a fever fit and swiftly deteriorated. At one stage he was having 200 seizures a day.

Ironically, it was accepted that he had been damaged by the jab because of the now-banned urabe-strain mumps component. (The original MMR jab was withdrawn because the mumps ingredient was found to cause potentially fatal mumps-meningitis). And it is only in recent weeks that examination of his brain tissue has found the more likely culprit to be the persistent measles virus that is "consistent" with the vaccine strain. Like the 13 year old whose plight was revealed last week, he too had had no known exposure to natural measles.

The examination of tissue on the 13 year old only took place because his epilepsy was so severe that surgery to remove the area believed to be sparking the seizures was recommended. Like the hundreds of autistic children, whose families also blame MMR, the boy also had digestive problems and bowel biopsies have also found measles virus consistent with the vaccine.

On a more positive note, the boy is now making progress at a special school and is at the moment seizure free. But his mother remains very worried. She said she decided to go public with the findings because she wanted to force the government to examine children like her son properly and undertake meaningful research. But there was no sign of that last week. The department of health said that none of this evidence had been "shared" with it and it could not comment.

CAPPER PASS

ARSENIC AND OLD LIES

ACCORDING to the mining multinational Rio Tinto, if 6,000lbs of arsenic and 5,494lbs of lead pour out of a tin smelter's chimneys every week, it's an environmental issue but not relevant to the health of workers inside the plant.

This intriguing line is supposed to explain why the company failed to disclose a damning batch of pollution test documents to the 600-plus former workers and others who are claiming compensation for deaths and illnesses they allege resulted from pollution from the Capper Pass smelter near Hull (*Eyes passim*).

The smelter, now closed, was the biggest in the world. For years the company insisted that cancers and other ailments suffered by its workers had nothing to do with the plant. Last year, however, under intense media and parliamentary pressure, Rio Tinto finally agreed a claims review scheme, chaired by the former appeal court judge, Sir Philip Otton.

Company documents, including health and safety data, would be central to proceedings. Accordingly, the review scheme's rules required the company to disclose "all quantitative data and test results relating to the exposure or potential exposure of the employee to any specified substances within the plant alleged to have been causative of the employee's illness or death".

This did not stop Rio Tinto from raising every imaginable obstacle before, finally, handing over six ring binders last October containing what it claimed was a complete set of documentation. On the basis of those documents, the claimants' solicitor, David Russell of Wakefield firm Towells, lodged more than 700 notices of claim with the review board by the deadline of 10 July this year.

He was astonished when, on 8 July, he received from the Environment Agency a bundle of extraordinary records detailing the former department of the environment's efforts to curb alarming and unlawful arsenic, lead, cadmium and other emissions from Capper Pass. The bundle included a series of letters to the plant's managing director complaining about grossly excessive emissions of lead and arsenic in the early 1970s.

David Russell immediately wrote to Rio Tinto and the claims review scheme's board complaining that the company had been trying to withhold vital evidence. Not at all, said Rio Tinto. The company's legal adviser, Charles Lawton, explained that Rio Tinto had agreed to disclose only "quantitative data and test results... related exclusively to the occupational exposure of employees" whereas the newly revealed (by the Environment Agency, not Rio Tinto) documents "relate to environmental rather than occupational exposure". He explained: "These data refer to process emissions and atmospheric conditions outside the smelter, not quantitative in-plant exposures of employees."

In other words, "the environment" exists only beyond the boundaries of the Capper Pass plant. What lies within, including the lead- and arsenic-laden air inhaled by employees, is somewhere else altogether.

Rio Tinto can expect more embarrassment. David Russell has taken a statement from a former driver of a waste tanker truck who worked at Capper Pass and who describes how he would be asked to tip loads of thick, yellowish waste into the River Humber at night to avoid detection. Once, however, he was told to dump a more than usually abnormal load into the river during the day because it glowed in the dark and therefore would be spotted at night.

INLAND REVENUE

Mr Integrity

ANY *Eye* reader who had difficulty understanding the letter from Gavin Houlgate, head of corporate communications at KPMG UK, in issue 1063 might be interested in the following new information.

Only weeks after Mike Rake (*sic*) was elected international chairman of KPMG and his colleague Robert W. Alspaugh became worldwide chief executive under the banner (Mr Houlgate tells us) of "quality and integrity", KPMG in the US attracted some rather unsavoury publicity.

On 10 July, the Internal Revenue Service (the US equivalent of the Inland Revenue) took KPMG to court to enforce summonses with which, it complained, KPMG had not complied. The summonses demanded information about so-called "tax shelters" (tax avoidance schemes) flogged by KPMG to its richest individual clients.

The sheer scale of the tax avoidance involved is breathtaking. Using something called the "foreign leveraged investment programme" and/or the "offshore portfolio investment strategy", KPMG managed to construct obscure offshore schemes that created artificial tax losses. These could then be "offset" against genuine taxable income. KPMG sold these schemes to 160 clients. The IRS could identify 57 of them, and reckoned that they generated bogus tax losses of $1.4bn, costing the US taxpayer many hundreds of millions of dollars.

As the *Eye* disclosed in the original piece, the chief operating officer of KPMG in the US during the sale of these schemes was Mr Quality and Integrity, Robert W. Alspaugh.

MOTION SICKNESS

DISCONTENT among tax inspectors about the Inland Revenue's sale of its buildings to a company in a tax haven is not confined to the problems of tax avoidance. At the recent conference of the PCS, the civil service union that includes Revenue employees, an intriguing motion was carried unanimously.

It ran as follows: "The transfer of the civil service estates into the private sector has not improved the running of the accommodation or the provision of health and safety. The private sector... has failed in numerous instances to perform in a competent manner, including non-payment of refuse collectors causing health hazards and non-payment of rents resulting, for example, in bailiffs being called to the Inland Revenue offices.

"This conference instructs the executive to publicise, no later than December 2002, a review and analysis of the results of the transfers of the estate including a catalogue of the main errors perpetuated upon civil servants."

When the union executive gets round to publicising these errors, perhaps it will keep the *Eye* in the picture?

EDS WILL ROLL

STOCKBROKERS in Britain and the US have been mourning the sudden and unexpected decline of the *Eye*'s favourite outsourcing computer company, EDS.

The British government's policy of stuffing EDS with contracts (see *Eyes passim*) seems to have come a bit of a cropper. For the *Financial Times* reported on its front of page on 19 September that EDS shares had slumped 34 percent. The paper quoted Dick Brown, EDS chief executive, saying: "The unexpected severity of the global slowdown in corporate spending especially in the last two months far exceeded our expectations."

Another helpless victim of global recession? Not quite. Five days later there was another report in the *FT*, headlined: "EDS Shares Hit by Fears of Loss from Derivatives." Derivatives! This was the form of stock exchange gambling on future prices that led to the collapse of Barings Bank.

According to investment bank Merrill Lynch, the real cause of the catastrophic collapse of EDS shares was the exposure of its "derivatives activities" (ie gambling) in which the company had engaged "to try to reduce the cost of issuing shares under its employees' stock option plan". A cruder mixture of greed and fear is hard to imagine.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **BUPA:** A coroner has recorded an open verdict on an elderly and mildly demented woman who was given a restricted anti-psychotic drug while at Isard House, the Bupa home at the centre of whistleblowing allegations last year of abuse, doping and neglect (see *Eye* 1042).

Audrey Ford, 83, was taken to Bromley hospital after she became rigid, suffering uncontrollable spasms at Isard House in July last year. The doctor recognised that she was suffering the side effects of anti-psychotic drugs and administered an antidote. But according to her daughter, Dilys Langley, Mrs Ford never recovered her speech or mobility and died just before Christmas in another care home. A pathologist reported that she had died of a deep vein thrombosis, most likely caused by immobility.

Mrs Ford was initially prescribed Thioridazine, an anti-psychotic with a heavy sedative effect which had been used to control dementia anxiety and agitation in the elderly until concerns were raised about its side effects. In December 2000 the Committee on the Safety of Medicines warned that it should be restricted for second line treatment of adult schizophrenics and that treatment should be supervised by a consultant psychiatrist. The balance of risks and benefits made it "unfavourable" for use by the elderly.

That warning did not filter through to doctors or care staff responsible for Mrs Ford for some time. When it did, and not long before she was admitted to hospital, a doctor prescribed another similar anti-psychotic, Trifluoperazine. The coroner said he could not be certain the anti-psychotics had caused Mrs Ford's death or, if they had done, whether or not they were inappropriately prescribed. That question would be for her daughter to pursue, he said. And this Mrs Langley intends to do. "I am extremely aggrieved that the year before my mother died, staff at Isard house had raised serious concerns with senior management over misuse of medication. My mother was given anti-psychotic drugs even though she had never been diagnosed with a psychotic illness and this medication was given without any consultation about side effects with my mother or myself."

A BUPA spokesperson said: "Elderly residents in BUPA homes are prescribed drugs by their own GPs. Staff in our care homes only administer medication prescribed by the GPs and work closely with them."

■ **ASBESTOS POISONING:** It seems that South African asbestos workers, ill and dying courtesy of the unsafe practices of Cape plc in its mines and factories, will have to take the multinational back to court to secure promised compensation.

Eye readers will recall how after a protracted legal battle, Cape finally agreed to pay £21m into a trust for thousands of black South Africans who have asbestos-related diseases. The first tranche of around £10m was due last June. But not a penny has yet made its way into the trust.

When protesters picketed Cape's agm last week to protest, nor was there any hint the company was about to pay up – merely excuses about banks not funding the company's planned restructuring.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE Iraq crisis has presented a golden opportunity to Russia's new generation of oligarchs – the successors to the pioneer robber barons who pillaged under Yeltsin, eager to be seen as respectable in the west – and especially to Russia's oil companies who are of increasing importance in the world market.

Russia is now the world's second biggest supplier; and it also has interest in the fate of Iraq's large oil fields: two reasons for Russian companies to be onside as far as Washington is concerned. Which may go some way to explain a rumoured discreet meeting last week at the White House between President Bush and Mikhail Khodorkovsky who runs the Yukos oil group. Khodorkovsky was said to have flown in and out by private jet from Moscow.

Russia would be a crucial player in the oil price in the event of a US invasion of Iraq resulting in any form of Arab embargo. Russia is also keen to protect its economic interests with Iraq. And Bush needs Russia's President Putin not to use his UN Security Council veto to block any resolution that would give him the opportunity for war.

Billionaire Khodorkovsky, Russia's richest man, is close to Putin. He is also interested in supplying oil to the US (a trial shipment was made on 4 July) and he is looking to list Yukos shares on Wall Street. So he and former oilman "Dubya" would have had a lot to talk about.

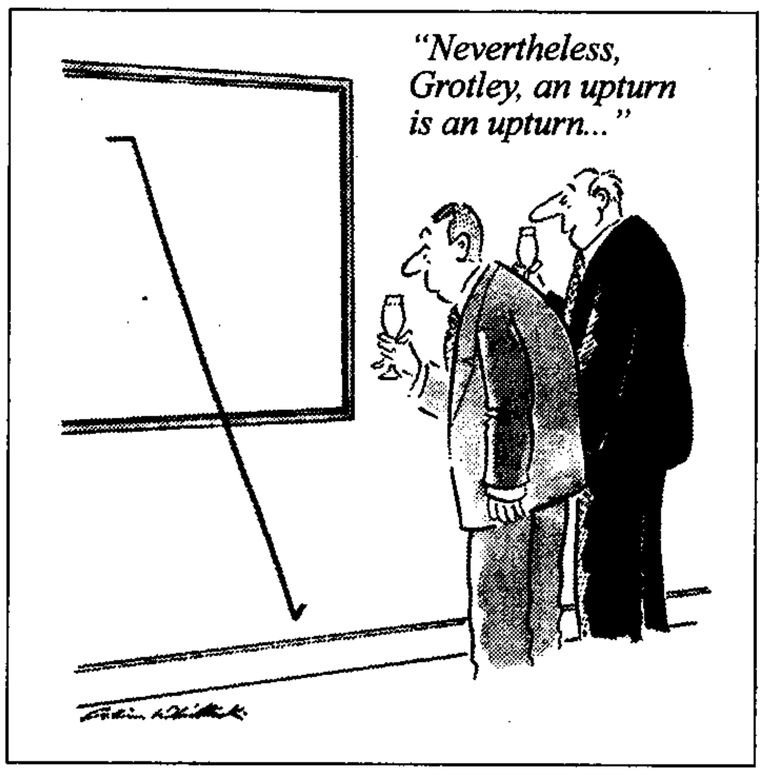
The new Russian oligarchs are eager to distance themselves from what went on in the 90s when there were widespread allegations of state-sponsored theft, organised crime links and massive diversion of untaxed billions into offshore tax havens. Russia, they say, is no longer the Wild East where the well-connected elite always gets the mine (or oil field) and everyone else, especially foreign investors, gets shafted.

This image clean-up is crucial if those major Russian companies like Yukos, with ambitions to tap into western capital markets, are to succeed. Like Yukos others are looking to obtain Wall Street listings too. So that requires more transparency about shareholdings and accounts. Balance sheets in Russia are even less believable than those in the US.

Khodorkovsky, who has also discovered philanthropy as a way to polish his reputation, has been the target of allegations of asset stripping both in Russia over how he came to control Yukos (a series of auctions of state assets widely believed to have been rigged) and by minority Yukos investors. He was also embroiled in the Bank of New York scandal through the role of his Menatep bank in payments totalling hundreds of millions paid through Bank of New York accounts. Menatep collapsed in 1998. Most of the money funnelled through the Bank of New York was capital flight and tax evasion; but some was certainly linked to Russian Mafia figures such as Semion Mogilevich. Khodorkofsky denies any wrongdoing or mafia links.

Some Russian companies – not Yukos – also need to deal with the flurry of embarrassing civil litigation in the US brought by business rivals or aggrieved investors with their colourful allegations of fraud, contract killings and mobster friends. Right now most of the leading corporate investigation firms are engaged by one side or another in such litigation seeking to prove or disprove the allegations that would effectively prevent any funding exercise or American depository receipts issue.

But cosying up to Russian oligarchs is always a cynical exercise in political pragmatism on one side and economic advantage on the other. Two



former oligarchs – Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky – came to realise that when they fell out with Putin.

Because the British government was keen to have Putin as a friend, especially after 11 September, it made clear to both Berezovsky and Gusinsky last year that they might be arrested if they came to Britain. Russia had threatened warrants seeking the arrest of both billionaires for fraud and money laundering. Berezovsky and Gusinsky denied any criminal offences and described the warrants as politically motivated. After the signing of a new extradition agreement, Russia urged that both should be arrested. To avoid any embarrassment their lawyers were advised they should not visit Britain.

The Blair government went even further with Gusinsky, refusing a request to renew his residence permit in Gibraltar or to grant him a British passport after he fled Russia. The Media Most tycoon was at that time living in Spain. He now travels on an Israeli passport.

Once the terrorism crisis passed it was decided that Putin no longer needed to be mollified. So Berezovsky is now based in London, from where he mounts attacks on Putin helped by more than £1bn largely held in City banks. Clearly he has been advised he no longer faces arrest and extradition. Whether he will be allowed to be so public in his criticism now that Putin's support is required on Iraq — witness last week's visit by Tony Blair to lobby the Russian president — remains to be seen. As does the future links between the US and Khodorkovsky.

THE accountants' joint disciplinary scheme is shortly expected to announce the tribunal verdict in its case against former Versailles auditor Thomas Dales from the small firm of Nunn Hayward. The tribunal hearing took place in August where Dales faced two complaints of negligence and failing to act with integrity.

The accusations relate to the Versailles accounts in the two years prior to its collapse in early 2000 and the provision of letters of comfort to its directors and lenders. The trade finance group collapsed into a £100m "black hole" resulting in a fraud trial due next year involving former chairman Carl Cushnie and finance director Frederick Clough.

Dales faces possible expulsion or a heavy fine plus costs. He has since left Nunn Hayward.

It is therefore no doubt entirely coincidental that Dales' wife Paula acquired his half share in their home last November with the aid of a mortgage. The price paid was £97,250. A snip considering that they live in a very large, detached house on a tree-lined street of similar properties in a highly desirable part of St Albans. The average price for detached houses in that area is more than £400,000 with some nearby properties on offer for up to £1m.

When the transaction was raised at the tribunal hearing Dales is understood to have denied either that it was a bid to divest himself of assets with which to pay any fine or that the price paid was unrealistically low. However, Mrs Dales certainly obtained a bargain. And Thomas Dales? He is still in residence along with his a Jaguar S with personalised number plates.

EYE readers may recall the confusion (see *Eye* 1026) that was created for Derrick Collin, chief executive of AIM-listed Comprehensive Business Services, by the existence of another Derrick Collin who was jailed in 1986 for deception and attempted extortion. Well, now the CBS Derrick Collin has outraged small shareholders by his plan to buy back the Brulines business he sold to CBS in 1999 for more than £3m for an effective price of around £850,000.

This would leave CBS to be liquidated repaying shareholders other than Collin, who owns almost 50 percent, with just 20p a share compared with the 65p at which CBS was floated and the 463p share price peak.

Shareholders are this week being asked to vote on the deal, which is backed by CBS's board and advisers Old Mutual Securities – but only after two directors who opposed it were forced out. Given that Collin took £1m cash out of the original deal, his offer is far from generous. Brulines, which provides software to pubs to measure beer flow and combat fraud, made a £700,000 loss last year. So why, it might be asked, is Collin so keen to buy? And why was the business not auctioned to ensure the best price was

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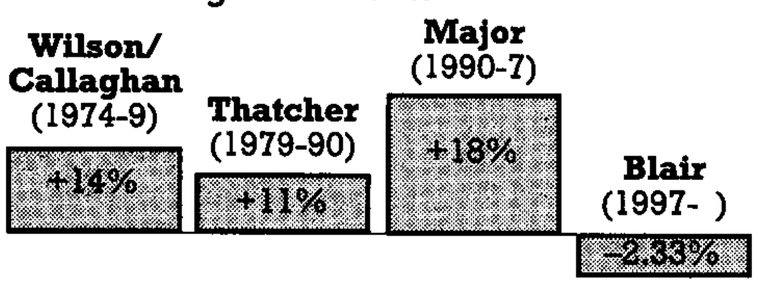


obtained? Once again it seems institutional shareholders are only too happy to take the money and run rather than put up a fight.

ADVANCE fee fraudsman Alan Shephard is now under attack in his Virginia home as well as the London courts. He has been hit with a $410,000 claim for fraud and breach of contract by a local horse show organiser. Shephard promised to put up prize money and then failed to come up with the cash. Not for the first time as the Hickstead organisers and the Army Benevolent Fund learned to their cost. Another Virginia horse show organiser had previously successfully sued Shephard and his wife for $80,000. With creditors seeking to enforce London judgments against him in Virginia, Shephard is now said to be operating from Estonia.

NIGERIAN fraudsters have decided to open up a new front in their neverending campaign to redistribute the wealth of the greedy and unwary. Instead of pretending to be corrupt African bankers or government officials or the relatives of dead dictators, their latest angle is to suggest they are Chinese!

A recent email offer of that old favourite, a share in liberating the $30m left in a bank deposit account by a British oil consultant killed in a car crash (in return for use of the recipient's bank account) came from a Mr Chan Fung of the Chinatrust Commercial Bank in Taiwan. Given the Chinese reputation for corruption this is a smart move. Especially as by now the "419" scam and Nigeria have become synonymous.

THE Whitehall noises indicating that nothing too radical is likely to emerge from the Higgs review of non-executive directorships will surprise nobody who understands why Derek Higgs was chosen by trade secretary Patricia Hewitt to produce the report due in December.

The supposed aim of the review is to end the cosy Magic Circle of mutually supportive executives who sit as non-execs on their friends' boards and nod whenever required. Such appointments of old and reliable friends are lucrative, not too time consuming and there is no limit to how many such wallet fillers a well-connected City gent can collect.

Merchant banker Higgs is a classic City insider always unlikely to rock any boat. Which is no doubt why the latest word is that there will be no limit to the number of non-executive directorships any one suit may take on. That will pacify Labour's City friends who fear new legislation to actually enforce real independence and effectiveness.

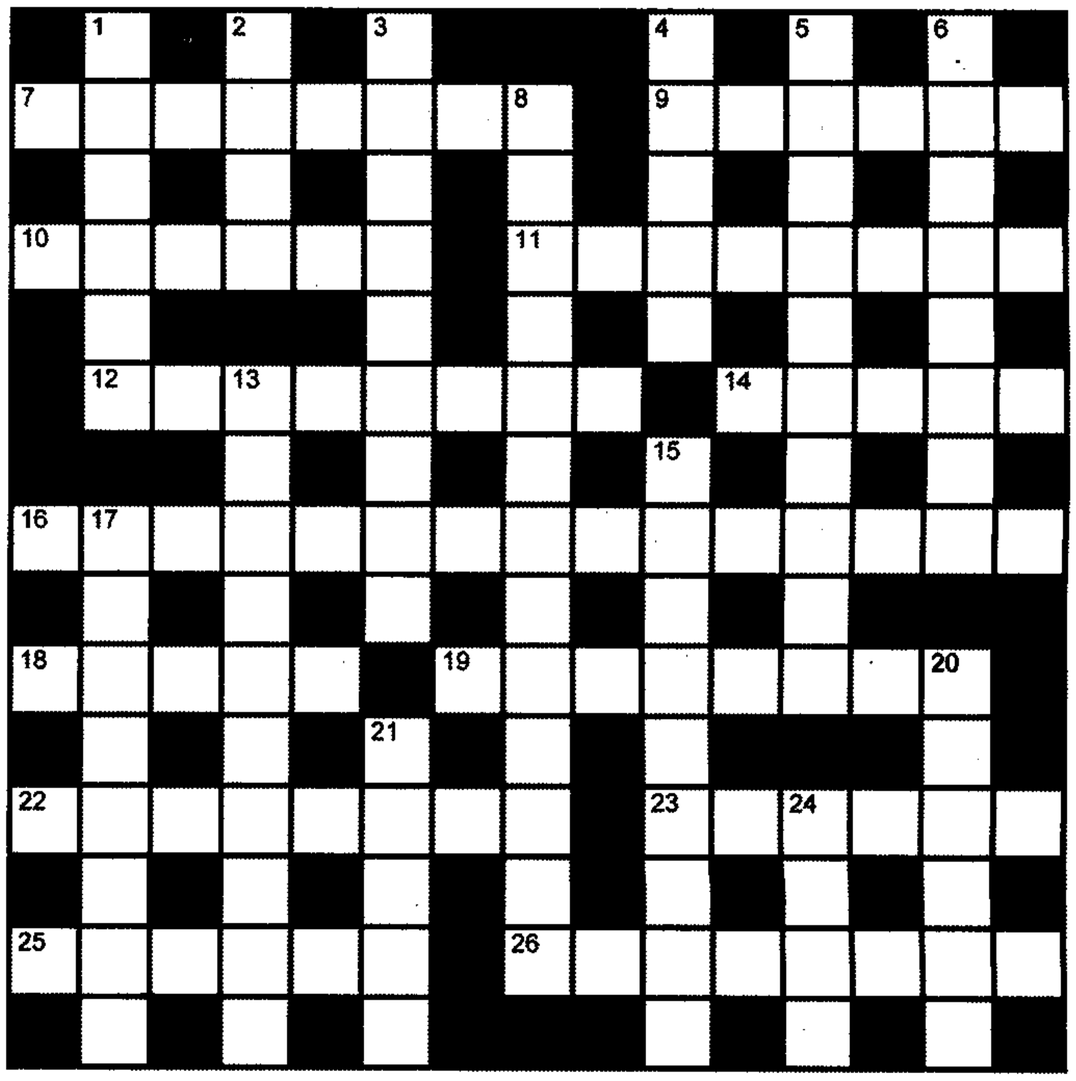
Higgs has links to fellow Sky Blue fan and former Labour treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson who sold him part of his stake in Coventry City soccer club. Definitely an investment out of love not money.

All of which makes critics of the Higgs review point to that fact that his very appointment is a reflection of the Magic Circle at work. Hewitt's first choice was said to be Sir Peter Davis, now of Sainsburys and before that of the Prudential and Reed. Higgs was a director of the Pru. Reed's merchant bankers were UBS Warburg. Derek Higgs is from Warburg. But then isn't that what friends are for?

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 220

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 25 October 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

7 Adolescent's down behind veteran DJ (3-5)

9 Formal reserve when presented with chopper is a great help to Hillary (3,3)

10 Euphemistic prostitute procuring banned substances reportedly arrested (6)

11 Kinky sex? Cue setter for partner-swapping fun on the floor (6-2)

12 Bearskin model has to strain to achieve triple-balled successful climaxes (3,5)

14 More than one Brown is a creep (5)

16 They'll give fast types an exciting ride – support and binding required between shags (8,7)

18 Hardly satisfying read, *Telegraph*'s leader (5)

19 US cracks about SAS predicaments (8)

22 They don't have the balls to raise their performance (8)

23 Tony originated crap about "resistance leads to the top" (1-5)

25 Having got an erection, shame it's difficult to control (6)

26 Turn of the genitals, long restrained, to come out into the open (2,6)

DOWN

1 Revolting attempt of lay educational centre to bung up WC (6)

2 Out for a cut (4)

3 Film hides truth about murderous swine (3-6)

4 "Bishop on sex charge" complaint (5)

5 That involving ex-leader of Conservatives and lass? (3,7)

6 Maybe one who got marked down arbitrarily as late in the morning accepted low grades (8)

8 Foreigners' gentle touching of balls – it has you gob-smacked and probed (6,7)

13 Do it to TV's Kate for Di (3,3,4)

15 Typical sort of gallivanting prisoner, getting end away, going to print ... (9)

17... doesn't hold with clip appearing in pisspoor *Sun* (8)

20 Sleazy bugger grabs little flower girl (6)

21 Was a judge possibly your short oversexed bloke? (5)

24 Cooker top gets round bum (4)

Crossword 219 winner: TERESA BLACK

ACROSS: 1 Heavy breather 8 Shell suit 9 Enema 11 Orals 12 Tarnished 13/10 All mouth and trousers 15 Stater 17 Hit off 19 Pompidou 22 Uncrowned 23 Agree 24 Plied 25 Erectness 26 Wedding tackle.

DOWN: 2 Eyeball 3 Voles 4 Blue tits 5 Eatery 6 The big top 7 Eyeshot 8 Stomach-pump 14 Offloaded 16 Cold feet 18 Tactile 20 Dorrell 21 Intern 23 Antic.

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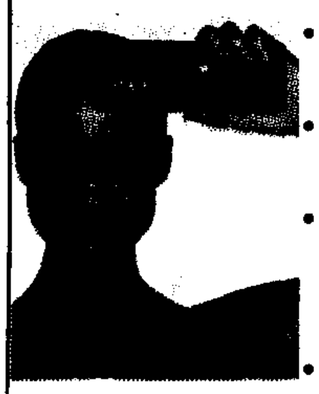

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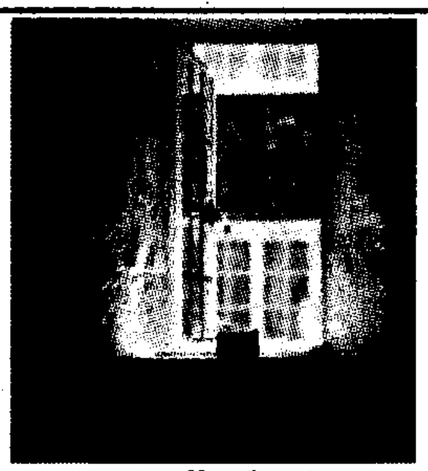

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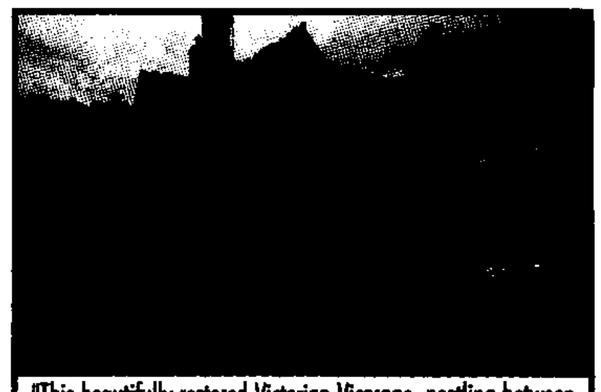

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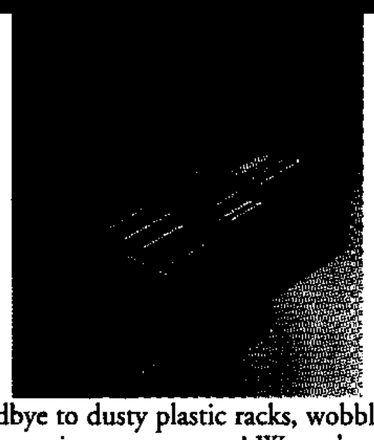

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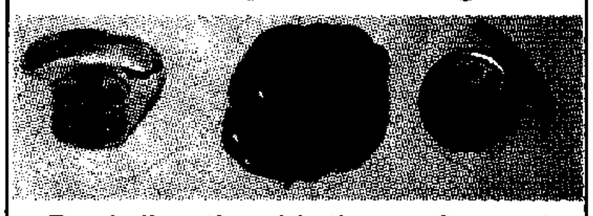

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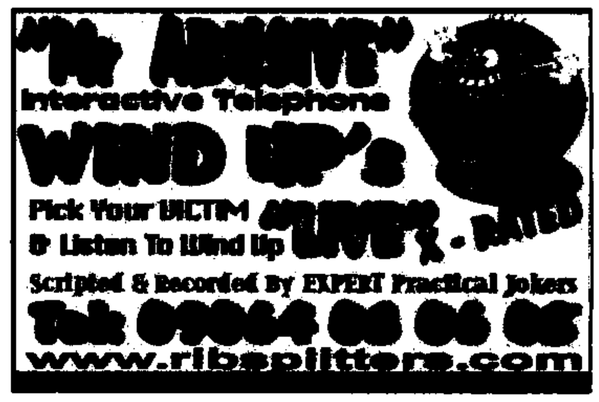

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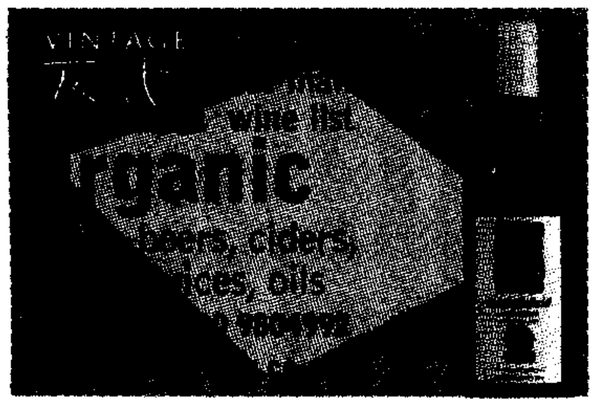

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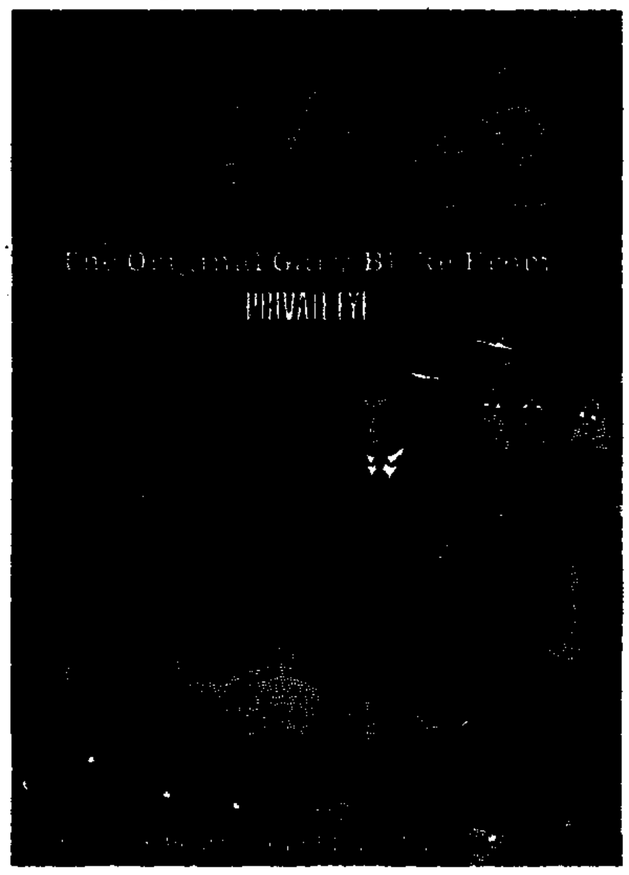

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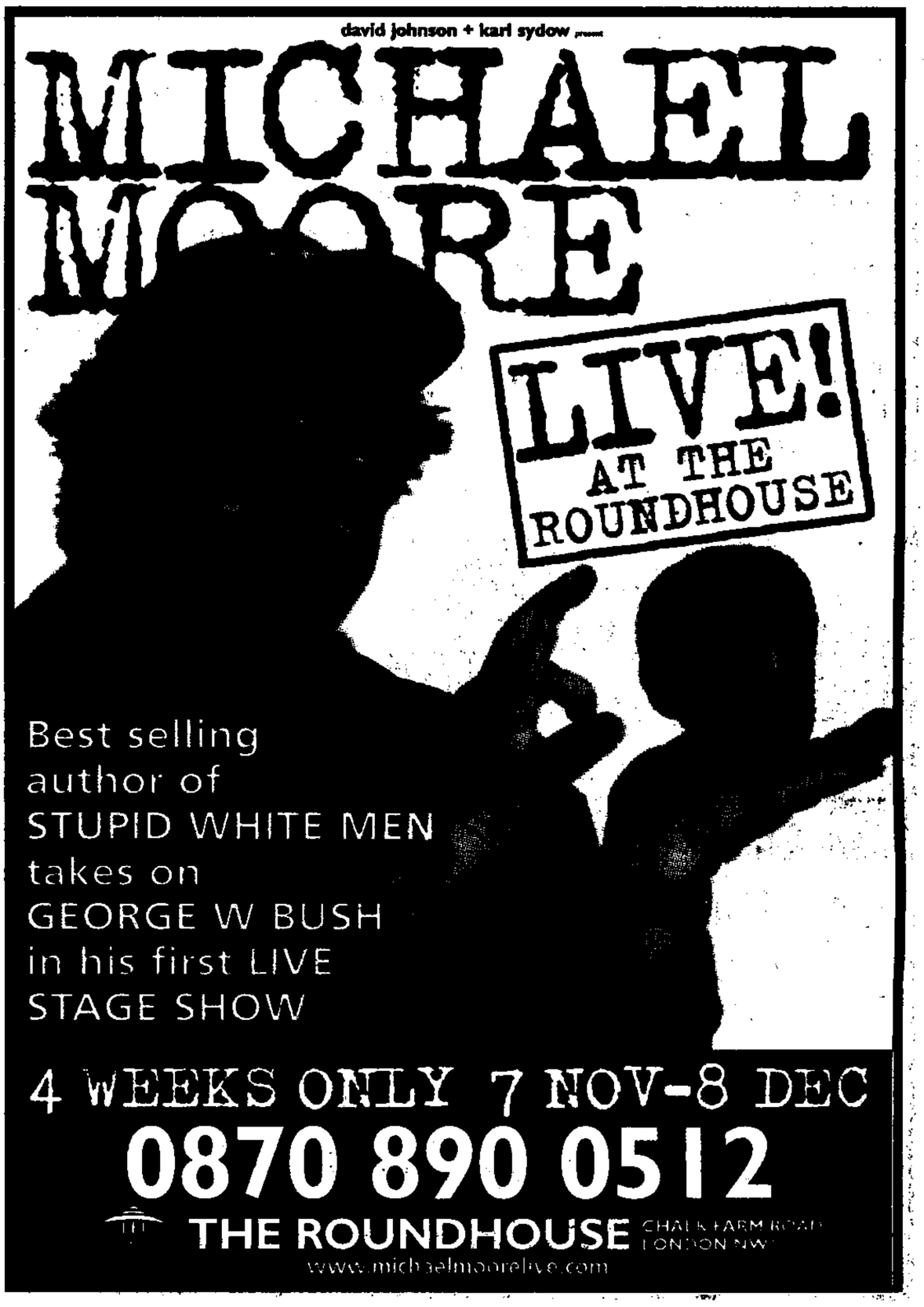

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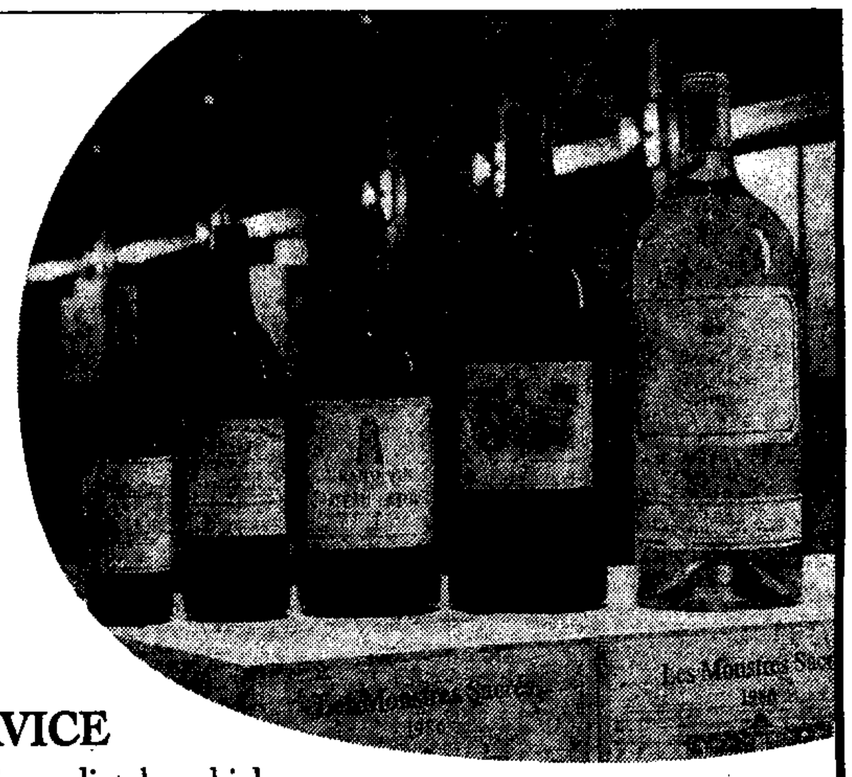

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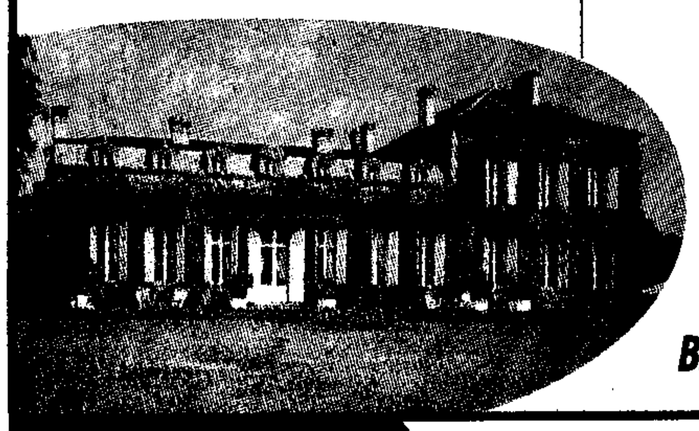
Léoville-Barton	£ 430
Gruaud Larose	£ 370
Talbot ❤	**£ 270**
Beychevelle	£ 270
Pauillac	
Haut-Batailley	£ 220
Grand-Puy Ducasse	£ 200
Lynch-Bages	£ 390
Saint-Estèphe	
Cos d'Estournel	£ 430
Phélan Ségur	£ 210
Haut-Médoc	
Peyrabon	£ 130
Sociando-Mallet ❤	**£ 300**
Moulis	
Chasse Spleen	£ 210
Poujeaux ❤	**£ 210**
Pomerol	
Gazin	£ 520
de Sales ❤	**£ 190**
Saint-Emilion	
Figeac	£ 600
Grand Corbin-Despagne ❤	**£ 190**
Péby Faugères	£ 400
Graves Pessac-Léognan, red	
La Mission Haut-Brion	£ 830
Carbonnieux ❤	**£ 210**
Smith Haut Lafitte	£ 310



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Beychevelle	£ 370
Pauillac	
Pichon Baron	£ 650
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Lynch-Bages	£ 650
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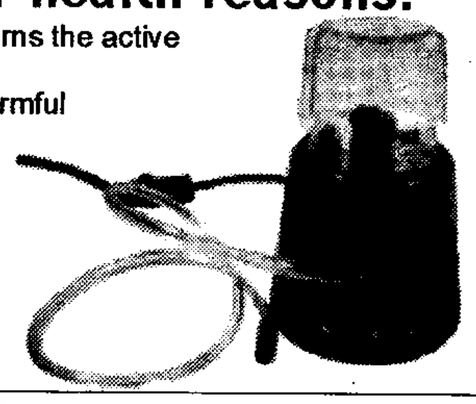

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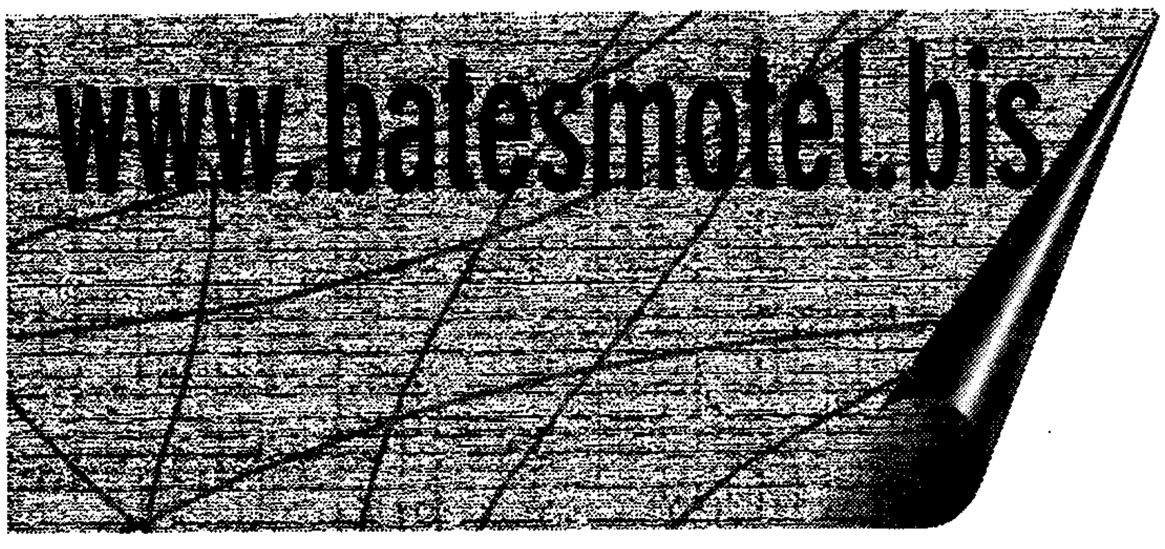

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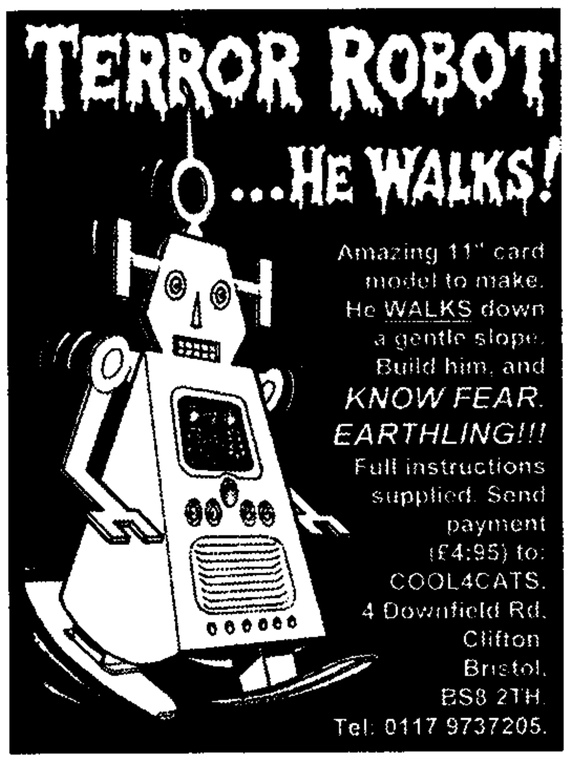
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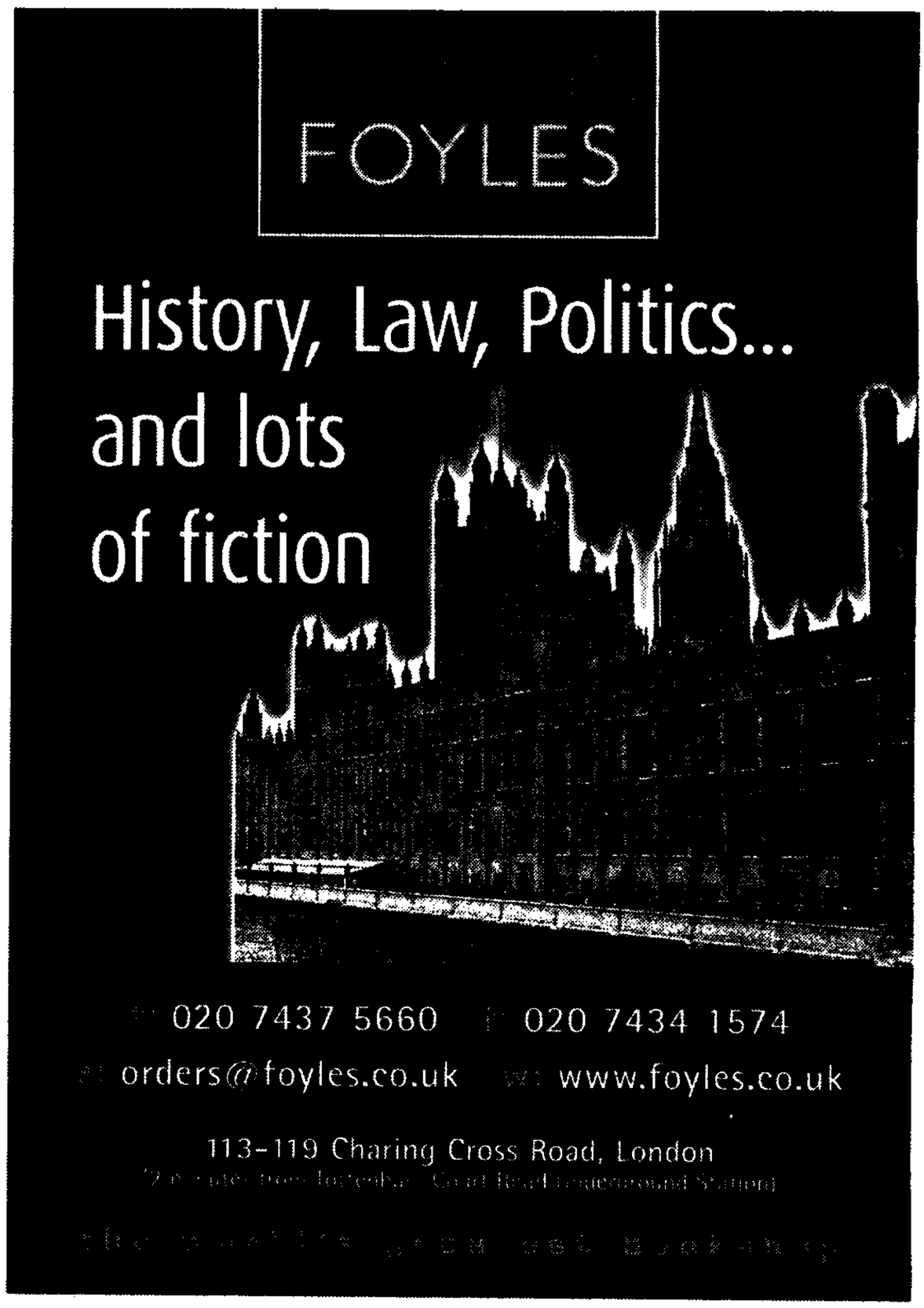

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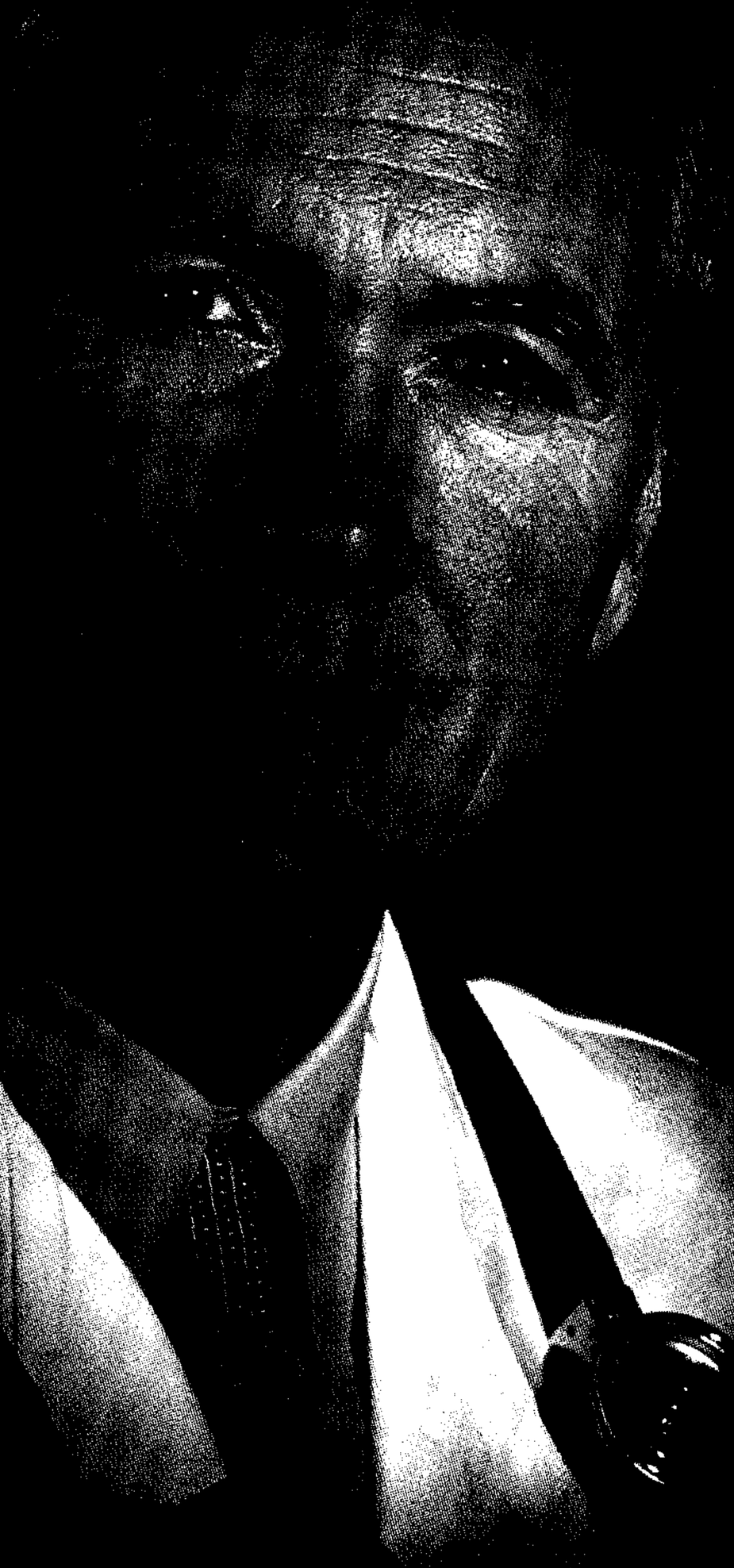

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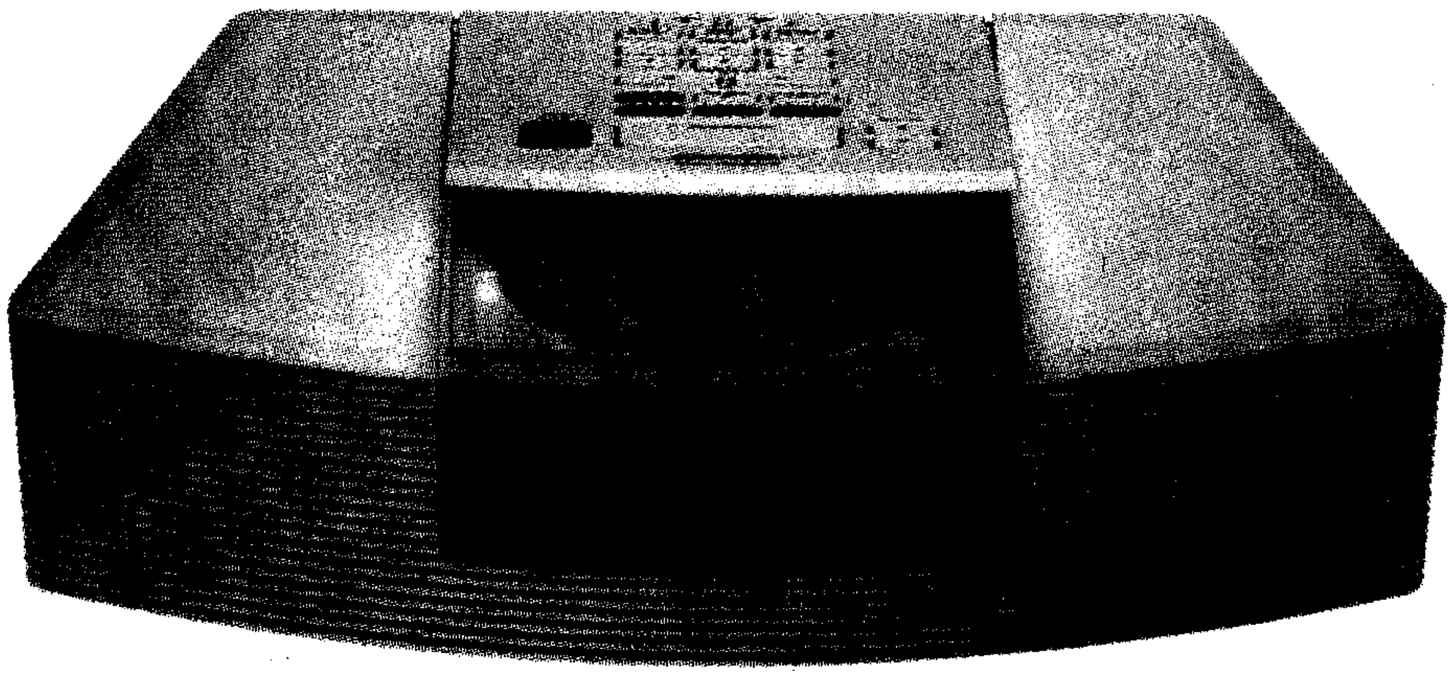

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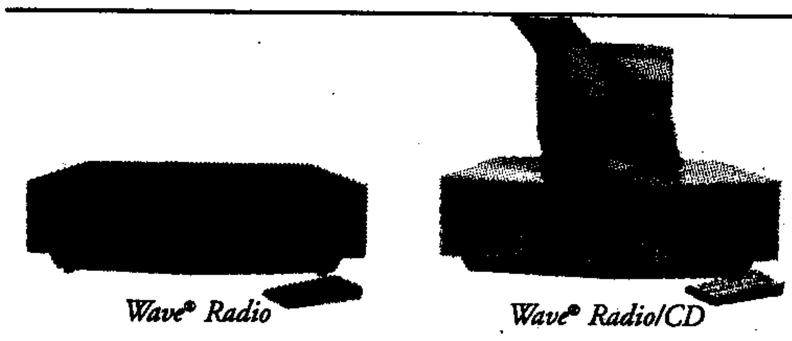

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